2 DISK ISSUE!

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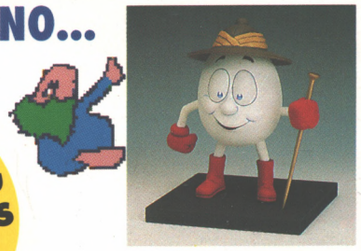

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...BIG PRIZES

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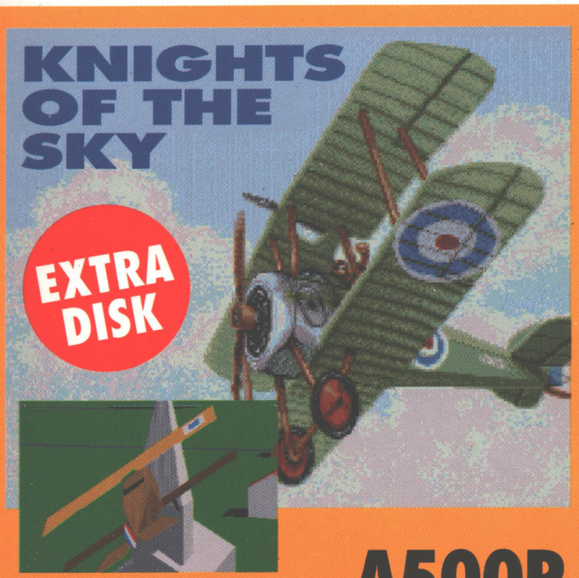

Giant slice of MicroProse's stunning new WW1 fight sim! It's the entire training section!

A500P COMPATIBLE

PUGGLES

PD

Now this is great – you've never seen a PD game like this before! It's a gigantic Q-Bert influenced arcade game and it'll have you glued to your Amiga for weeks! If you only do yourself one favour this winter, here it is!

AMIGA POWER

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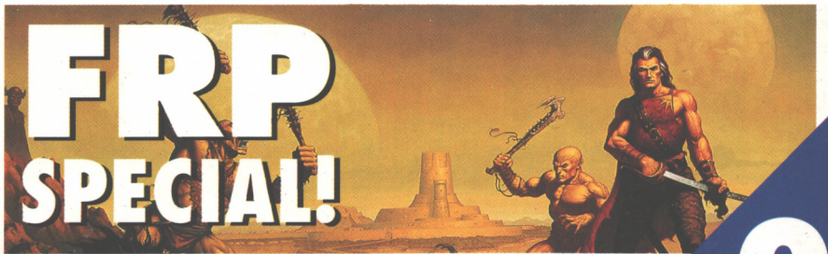

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ISSUE 9

WIN! FIVE REMOTE CONTROL PLANES! FOOTBALL GAME BUYER'S GUIDE! AND LOTS MORE!

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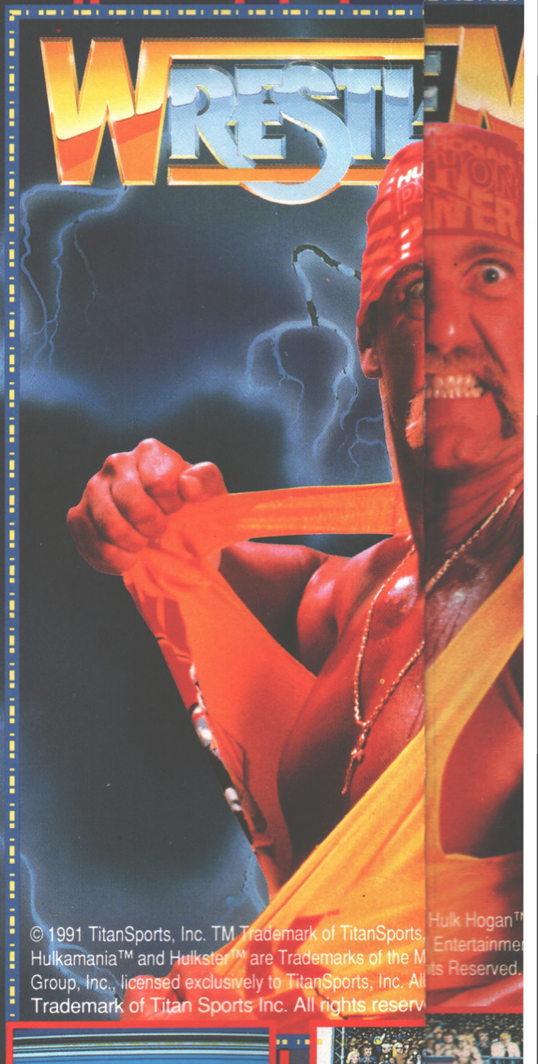

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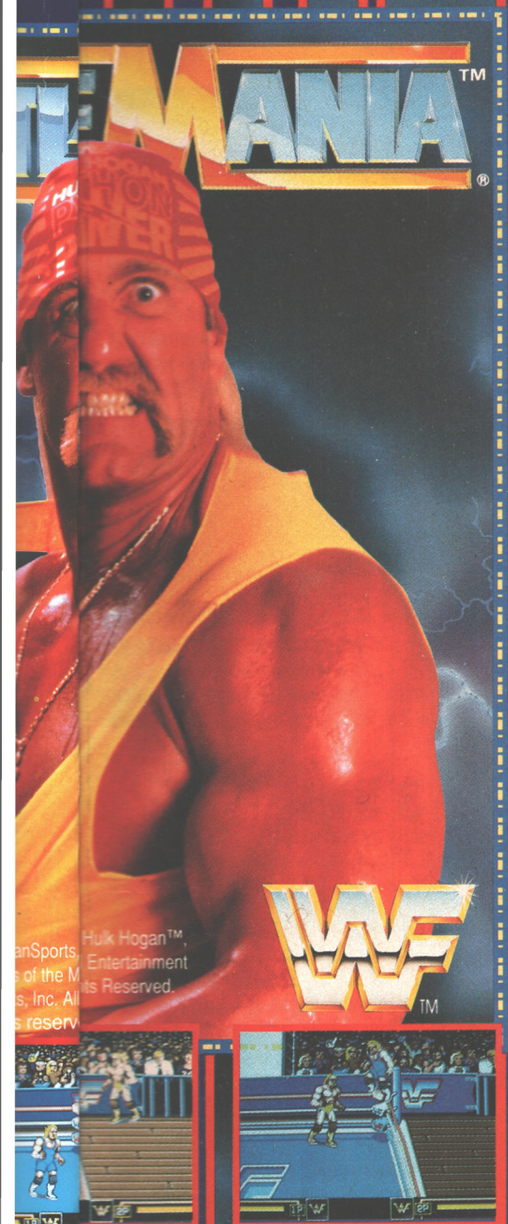

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Bartholomew J. Simpson here, with a very important secret:
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That's right man! A buncha slimy, horrible, totally gross and putrid monsters are taking over the bodies of the people who live here and they wanna build a weapon that's gonna take over the entire planet!
Anyway, yours truly is the only one who can see 'em! I've gotta spray-paint things, get radical on my skateboard, use my trusty slingshot, and in general behave like a nuisance, man.
So if your decent person a patriot, and somebody who cares about this sorry planet, you'll do the right thing.

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AMIGA POWER
ISSUE NINE JAN 1991

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DIAL A HITMAN DEPT: Hi to everyone we met at the World Of Commodore show! Stuart Campbell kept his head low – rumour has it the industry had clubbed together and a team of trained hit men were roaming Earls Court looking for him – and Penn was probably off snogging his new girlie somewhere, but the rest of us took part in a seemingly endless round of talks, panels and – yes! – autograph signings throughout the four day event. Matt Bielby struggled a bit on the Sunday after a drunken loony bust his lip, but otherwise things were judged a roaring success...

BLIMEY MISSUS!: It's hard to know what to write about this one – our 'Send in pictures of nude people' compo has to be judged a hit. Plenty of young children at bathtime and pics cut out of magazines ranging from Options to... (ahem), but it was the more, erm, 'imaginative' entries that were most interesting. Er, well done?

THIS MONTH'S COMPO: We've had sex – now we want beer! Send us your unopened cans or bottles to the usual AMIGA POWER address. Best tasting or most unusual wins some games, but to those who don't win, thanks in advance – we'll enjoy receiving your entries! (Oh, and try to pack them so they don't smash in transit, eh?)

AMIGA POWER comes to you from Future Publishing, home of Amiga Format, Amiga Shopper, ST Format, Your Sinclair, Commodore Format, Amstrad Action, Sega Power (oh, sod writing the list out for a lark) lots of other ones.

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12 TRUE STORIES
New games – *Eye Of The Beholder 2* and *John Madden American Football* amongst others – and loads more, including five Bug joysticks to win and all your 'favourite' regulars. Plus! We ask the burning question – what'll be the Christmas Number One?

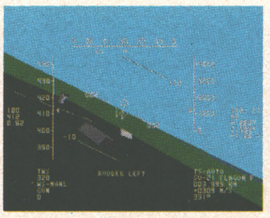
20 THE CHARTS
Going up, coming down and all that jazz – will *Lotus 2* cruise straight into the top slot, or *what?*

55 COMPLETE CONTROL
Britain's favourite Amiga tips section *really* kicks into gear, with giant *Blues Brothers* maps, *Cruise For A Corpse* – the solution, and the complete AMIGA POWER guide to *Rodland*...

80 GAMES OF THE YEAR
Coups in Russia, civil war in Yugoslavia, Maggie 'graciously' bows out, and AMIGA POWER is born – that was 1991 for you. It was also a year when plenty of ground breaking new games were released – not to mention a whole host of stinkers. We pick through the rubble for our personal favourites...

GAMES OF THE MON

SMASH TV
Total Carnage – we love it! Well, we *did* in the arcades... Page 24



BIRDS OF PREY
Blimey! 40 – 40! – birds in one game! Page 28

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Hex-based strategy meets *Chaos* Page 36

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What, a Sega game with *character*? Page 38

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It's a first! The innovative gore on/gore off option(!) Page 42

72 MAGIC AND MYSTERY TOUR

A new age of FRP games is upon us. *Eye of The Beholder* showed the way, but the best – *Beholder 2, Ultima VI* – is just around the corner. Mark Ramshaw investigates.

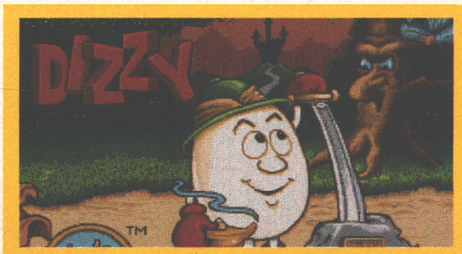
113 DEFINITION OF SOUND
Continuing our new series of Buyer's Guides. This month: football games, a field dominated by two small words...

119 WIN! FIVE REMOTE CONTROL PLANES!
AP teams up with EA to bring you a *Birds Of Prey* compo – if we can keep our hands off the prizes, that is...

121 DO THE WRITE THING
Your letters, now a giant three pages long (special bonus size), and featuring Stuart N. Hardy's brother, Paul!

129 THE BOTTOM LINE
Bigger, better, brighter, more!

138 SECOND OPINION
Domark's John Kavanagh, the man behind *MiG-29* and... *STUN Runner*!



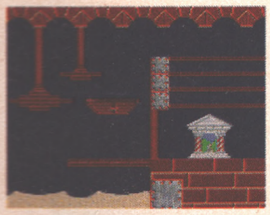
The huggable *Dizzy* – is he sex on a stick, or what?

86 DARLINGS!

The lovable computer whiz kids are still with us – and selling more games (*and* making more money!) than ever. What? You want games with puzzles and character – and at a cheap price? You don't care too much for fancy parallax scrolling – or scrolling *at all*, even – if decent gameplay is there? Then who you gonna call? (Code Masters!)

OVER 300
GAMES RATED IN EVERY ISSUE!

MONTH



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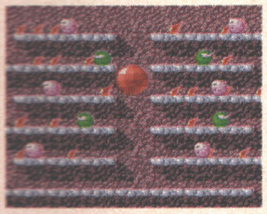
And suddenly, out of the blue, *Powermonger* gets a rival... Page 44



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Furry, fun and – wow! – look at the speed blurs on *that*..! Page 46

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Or, gameplay-by-numbers if you're feeling cynical Page 48

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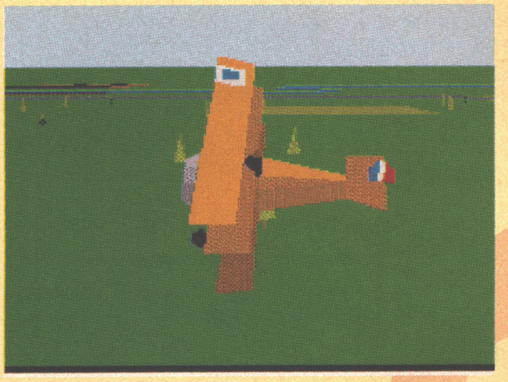
disk NINE

This month we've got something a little extra for you – a second disk's worth of extra, in fact – and all for hardly any extra money at all really! First up, our extra Christmas Bonus Disk features a complete section from MicroProse's stunning new WWI flight sim, *Knights Of The Sky* – if you're a fan of the game style you'll be in seventh heaven, and even if you're not, well, this is the game to convert you. It's hard to think of any recent covermount you'll get as much play out of as this one – if it wasn't for the truly stunning PD game stuff we've got on the *real* AMIGA POWER Disk 9, that is. One look at the complete, never-before-seen *Puggles* and you'll know the spirit of Christmas *isn't* dead...

THIS IS OUR CHRISTMAS BONUS



KNIGHTS OF THE SKY

Don't be taken in by lesser efforts – this is the full unabridged Flight Training section of MicroProse's most enjoyable flight sim yet (there's more gameplay here than many a complete full price product). Fly around in any of a wide variety of wizard crates, shoot down enemy fighters, crash heroically into the ground and hone your skills in readiness for the real thing – it's real seat-of-the-pants stuff, and, as such, the ideal introduction into what flight sims are all about, as well as one of the most enjoyable, proficient and complete demo thingies around in its own right. In fact the only thing better is the complete full game, in the shops any day now...

AND THIS IS DISK NINE

PUGGLES

This month's visit to Nostalgia Corner takes in a fabulous version of one of the first cutie arcade games, *Q-Bert*. Bounce around a series of pyramids, changing the colours of the floor tiles and wondering just what the original programmer was on when he came up with this one all those years ago – you'd be tempted to say "they don't make 'em like that anymore", except that this is a brand new, up-to-date version, so they quite plainly do!

DISK RETURNS

There's so much to explain about *Knights Of The Sky* and *Puggles* this month that this bit's been pushed right up here. The message is simple, of course – if your disk doesn't work (and it should, both disks are A500 Plus compatible and everything) we'll replace it for you. Just send it off – with an SAE – to AMIGA POWER Disk 9 Returns (*Knights Of The Sky* or *Puggles*), Disk Copy Labs, Unit A, West March, London Road, Daventry NN4 4SA. Your problems are over!

disk NINE

KNIGHTS OF

Authors: Kevin Buckner, Andrew Parton, Mark Langerak
Publisher: MicroProse

THE WINGS OF WAR – OR SELECTING WHICH PLANE YOU'D LIKE TO HIT THE GROUND IN...

THE 50-MINUTERS

As all *Blackadder Goes Forth* fans will know, the life of a World War I fighter pilot was a perilous (and usually pretty short) one. Much of the reason for this was the pioneering nature of flight technology at the time – remember, the first ever aeroplane journey was only a few years before the outbreak of hostilities. Men took to the air in rickety old orange boxes held together with wire and shot at each other with pistols, and you were in at least as much danger of simply falling out of the sky as your plane stalled, went out of control or just fell apart underneath you as you were of being shot down by the enemy. As the war progressed, though, the technology advanced at breakneck speed until the aircraft were merely dangerous, not lethal, and technicians developed weaponry which was actually attached to the planes! It's at this point that we join the action...

BUMPING ALONG ON THE TRAIL OF THE RED BARON

Reviewed in last month's AMIGA POWER, *Knights Of The Sky* received a remarkable score of 87 percent, with reviewer Jonathan gushing "It's got the lot", and "You've really got to try it to see the attraction". Well now you can. In the 'Flight Training' game which we've given you here, you can choose to pilot any of the 20 major aircraft which took part in the war, on the German or Allied side, though you're always fighting on the side of the good guys (if you fly a German plane it's nominally one which has been captured by the Allies). You take off from one of sixteen permanent aerodromes in the Flanders region where most of the fighting

THOSE MAGNIFICENT KEYS FOR THE FLYING MACHINES

Being a flight sim, *Knights Of The Sky* boasts a fair old number of controls, and to get full use of even this training session you're going to have to know quite a few of them. Here, then, are the 'biggies', divided into three different categories, just so you don't get totally confused and crash straight into an aircraft hangar or something.

VIEWPOINT CONTROLS

These keys allow you to look at the action from any one of a vast number of viewpoints – you can observe your plane (and impending crash) in action from just about anywhere. For extra fun, try playing the game for start to finish using one single external view.

F1 - remote control view
F2 - Tactical view/scroll through other planes
F3 - bombing view
F4 - chase plane view
F5 - slot front
F6 - slot back
F7 - slot left
F8 - slot right
F9 - slot down
F10 - slot up

1 - look forward from cockpit
2 - look backwards from cockpit
3 - look left from cockpit
4 - look right from cockpit
Z - zoom view
X - unzoom view

PLANE FLIGHT CONTROLS

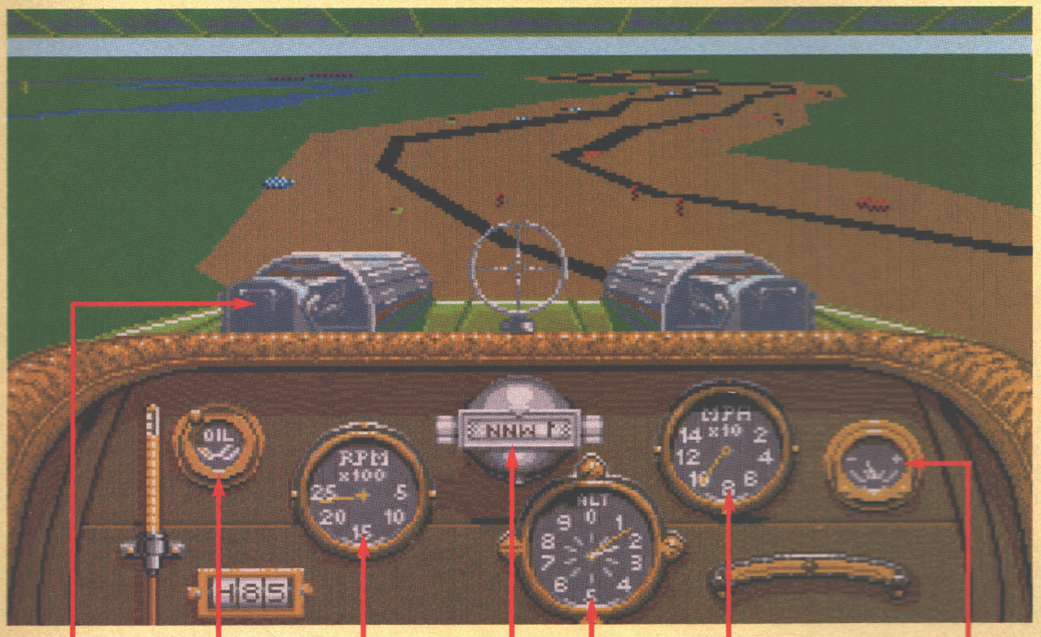
This selection of controls you use to actually control your plane. Being a rather primitive old crate, there aren't anywhere near as many as you'll get with an F-16 or whatever (thank goodness), but there are still a fair handful to get your mind (and fingers) around. They go something like this...

+ - throttle up
– - throttle down
Del - drop bomb
< - left rudder
> - right rudder
L - auto landing
O - toggle engine on/off
Space - look at map
S - adjust input sensitivity
U - unjam machine gun
Shift with + - maximum throttle

OF THE SKY

took place, and your objective is simply to practice aerial manoeuvring and dogfighting against the enemy pilots who are also roaming the area – if you want to fly an actual real-life mission, go and buy the game proper instead!

THE HUN: YOUR PART IN HIS DOWNFALL



Here you see your two nose-mounted machine guns. They're tops for blowing the Hun out of the sky, but be careful they don't jam...

Oil level indicator. This, er, indicates the level of oil in the engine. Beside it is the engine temperature gauge which, um, gauges the temperature of the engine

The rev counter shows – oh go on, have a guess. If it gets too low, you'll stall the engine

Compass – your only means of navigation

The altimeter gives your height in hundreds of feet – as you can see, stratospheric operating ceilings weren't on the agenda in 1917 (no oxygen required)

Speed reading – you have to wonder how the things managed to stay in the air at 20mph, don't you? Or how the pilots stayed alive at 140mph out in the open

Fuel tanks weren't all that copious in the early days, so don't stray too far from your home base before popping back for a refill

MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

Knights Of The Sky isn't one of those games that throws you in at the deep end. As well as flying planes of various capabilities, you can play at one of five skill levels. The first two levels don't allow you to crash (if you fly into the ground the game will put your plane back on its wheels for you to take off again without even slowing down), and the other three introduce enemy pilots of varying talents. Separately, you can also choose whether you want no enemies at all (if you just want to fly around and look at the sights), unarmed enemies (so you can get to grips with dogfighting without ever having to lose – ha!), or ordinary armed and dangerous enemies who'll blow you out of the sky at the slightest opportunity. All these options are accessed from self-explanatory menus at the start of the game. All you need to do now is load it up and do some experimenting. Good luck! ●

PUGGLES But hold, that's not all! To uncover the full delights of our second disk, featuring *Puggles*, just flip the page.

Shift with – - minimum throttle

Arrow keys - Believe it or not, you can actually use these keys to steer that there plane!

ADDITIONAL CONTROLS

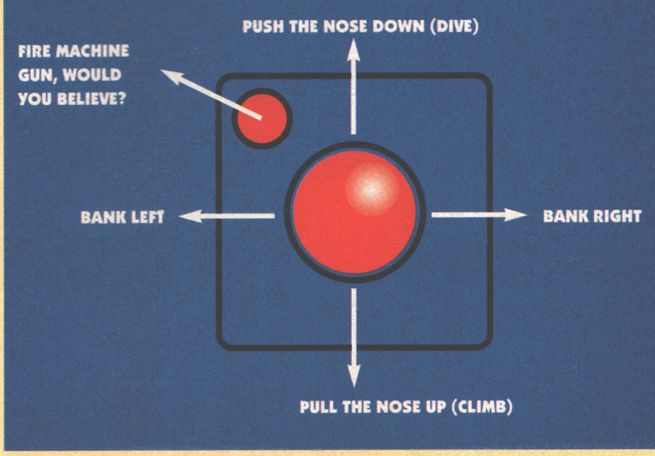
Here we find various odds and sods which aren't *directly* connected with the business of actually keeping yourself up in the air (but prove jolly useful all the same...)

J - activate joystick
M - activate mouse
K - activate keyboard

R - replay recent flight
Tab - control icon on/off
F2 - with Shift, reverse tactical view/scroll through other planes
Z - with Alt, maximum zoom
X - with Alt, minimum zoom
A - with Alt, accelerate time on/off
D - with Alt, adjust detail levels
P - with Alt, pause
Q - with Alt, quit
R - with Alt, toggle automatic replay
S - with Alt, toggle sound levels
T - with Alt, toggle town names on/off (in flight map)

And there you have it. Now hop in, and happy flying!

KNIGHTLY CONTROLS



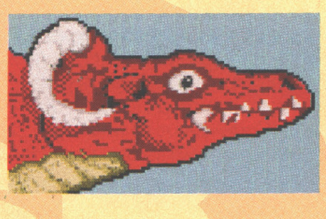
disk NINE

PUGGLES

PD

THE STORY SO FAR

There aren't many things cuter than a flower, but one of them is Puggette. This unpromisingly-named little piggy-type character is the girlfriend of Puggles, a green spring-like geezer with no nose. So how does he smell? We've no idea, but what we *do* know is that his babe Puggette's been kidnapped by



a big scaly dragon and he wants her back (and the rest of her, too), so he decides that he's got no option other than to go to the dragon's castle and rescue her. Of course, it's not as simple as just walking up to the drawbridge and going "Can I have my girlfriend back please, Mr Dragon?". Oh no. To rescue the fair (well, she's mostly bald as it happens, but let's not get picky) and beautiful (okay, so she could do with losing a few pounds, but hey – it's personality that counts) Puggette, Puggles (did you know 'puggled' is an old Scottish word meaning 'extremely tired'? Thought not) has to travel through 28 (count 'em!) screens of pyramid-orientated mayhem! Want to know more? Then read on..!

Authors: The Hidden, alias Craig Howard, Simon Leggett, Will

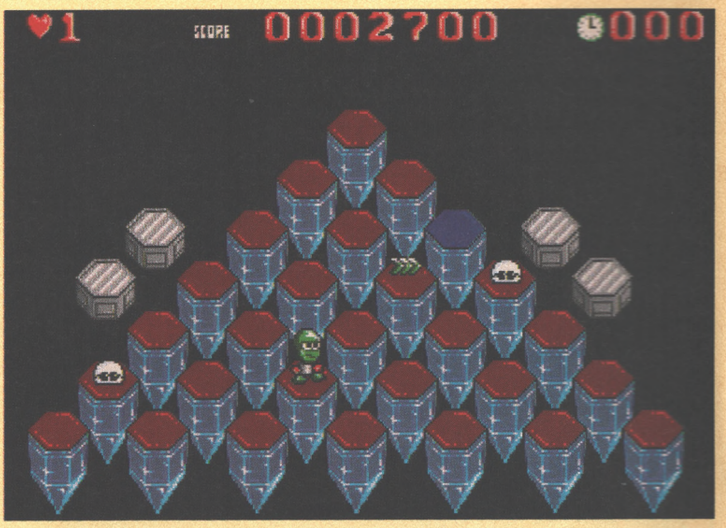
SO HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

Well, the game is divided into seven different worlds, each one consisting of four screens built up of coloured tiles. Puggles has to hop across every tile in each room with his magic colour-changing feet – as he does so each one will be restored to its correct colour, and when he's done them all our hero can move onto the next screen (unless, of course, it's one of those screens when you have to paint the tiles more than once, but you'll become aware of these complications as you encounter them!) After completing the four stages of one world it's onto the next one, naturally enough, which he does Silver Surfer-style with a quick flight through space on his space surfboard, avoiding asteroids by dodging left and right or jumping over the oncoming rocks.

BUT HANG ON A MINUTE – YOU HAVEN'T MENTIONED THE BAD GUYS!

Ah yes, them. As you no doubt worked out for yourself, all this would be as a stroll in the park on a lazy Sunday afternoon were it not for the presence of several bad guys on each stage, all of whom try to divert Puggles from his task by the subtle and devious tactic of, er, killing him. Particularly evil is the Ultrabaddie (a snowman on the first world), who moves as fast as Puggles and tracks him unerringly across the screen. The only way to defeat this twisted space creep is by either completing the screen or leaping onto one of the teleporters which lie suspended in the ether at either side of the pyramid. Landing on one of these when the Ultrabaddie is right on our hero's tail will transport Puggles back to his starting tile, but the quasi-sub-matter hypertransference field will cause the Ultrabaddie to disintegrate on the spot and die (unsurprisingly enough).

Also on the side of the angels is the array of power-ups which gratuitously materialise on the pyramids from time to time. You'll find smart bombs which kill all the baddies on screen, magic potions which make Puggles temporarily invincible, arrows which catapult him onto the next stage and hearts which give him an extra life – but you might also be daft enough to pick up skulls which kill him, upside-down joysticks which reverse the joystick controls (argh!) or gluey stuff which removes Puggles' powers of movement for a while. Don't do it!



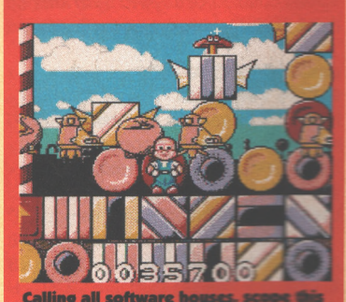
Painting the whole town red in *Puggles*. Watch out for those spec-tators, and remember, if things get to tough, that collectable arrow transports Puggles to the next screen.

AND THAT'S IT REALLY

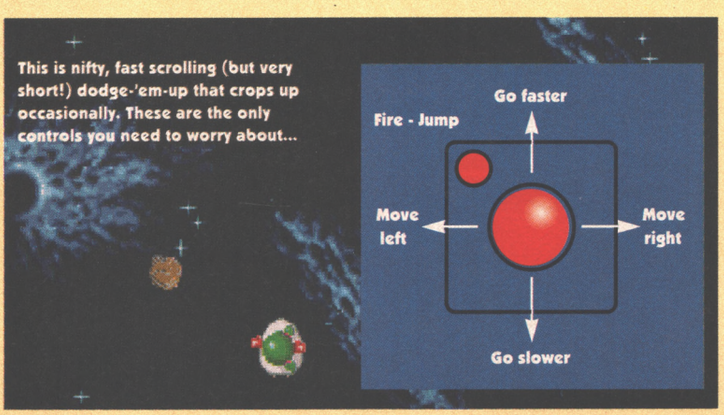
Apart from the fact that yes, you're right – this is actually a version of ancient arcade classic *Q-Bert*. Readers-who've-been-around-a-bit may remember Ocean's Spectrum variant on the theme *Pogo*, but while countless versions have cropped up since then, there's never been a commercial (or, indeed, decent PD) Amiga – until now. Despite its PD status, then, this is an cute Amiga game to rank with the likes of *Pang* – and remember, you saw it here first! ●

THE HIDDEN

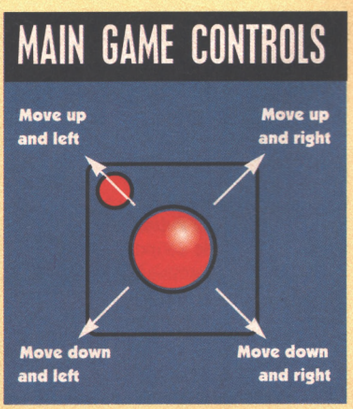
The Hidden are Craig Howard, Simon Leggett and William Bell. They're all either 19 or 20 years old, and studying HND Computer Studies at college in Norwich. *Puggles* is their first game ("we'd written a few little demos beforehand, but nothing in the way of games at all"), and was inspired by the classic Spectrum game *Pogo* and was written in nine months "as much as a learning thing as anything. Someone at college was complaining that there wasn't a decent *Q-Bert* game on the Amiga, so we thought we might as well write one." They're already working on new stuff, including a big cartoon console-style game called *Stomper Tantrum* which they're hoping to sell to a commercial software house. On the strength of their first effort, we don't think they'll have any trouble at all. Just remember where you heard about them first...



Calling all software houses, scope this pic of The Hidden's *Stomper Tantrum*.



MAIN GAME CONTROLS



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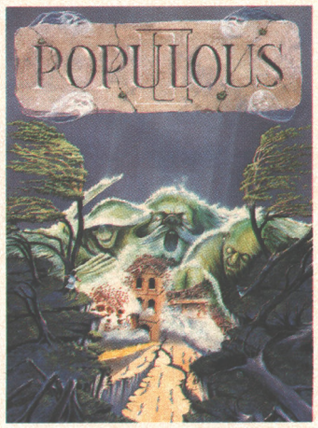
THE GODS ARE BACK AND ALL HELL IS ABOUT TO BREAK LOOSE

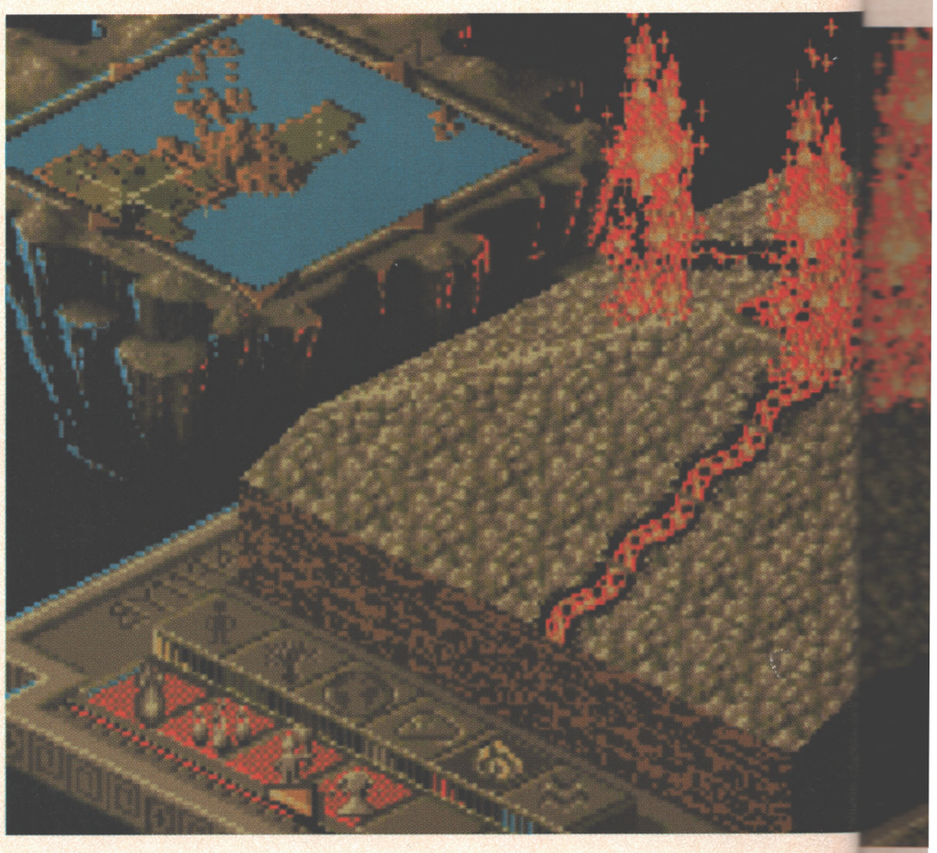
Populous II has arrived and it's everything you'd dreamt it might be - and more.

More earthquakes, more volcanoes, more tidal waves,



Available late December for Amiga and ST.

£29.99



more deadly swamps, in fact the most devasting natural disasters known to man, and a few he hasn't heard of yet.

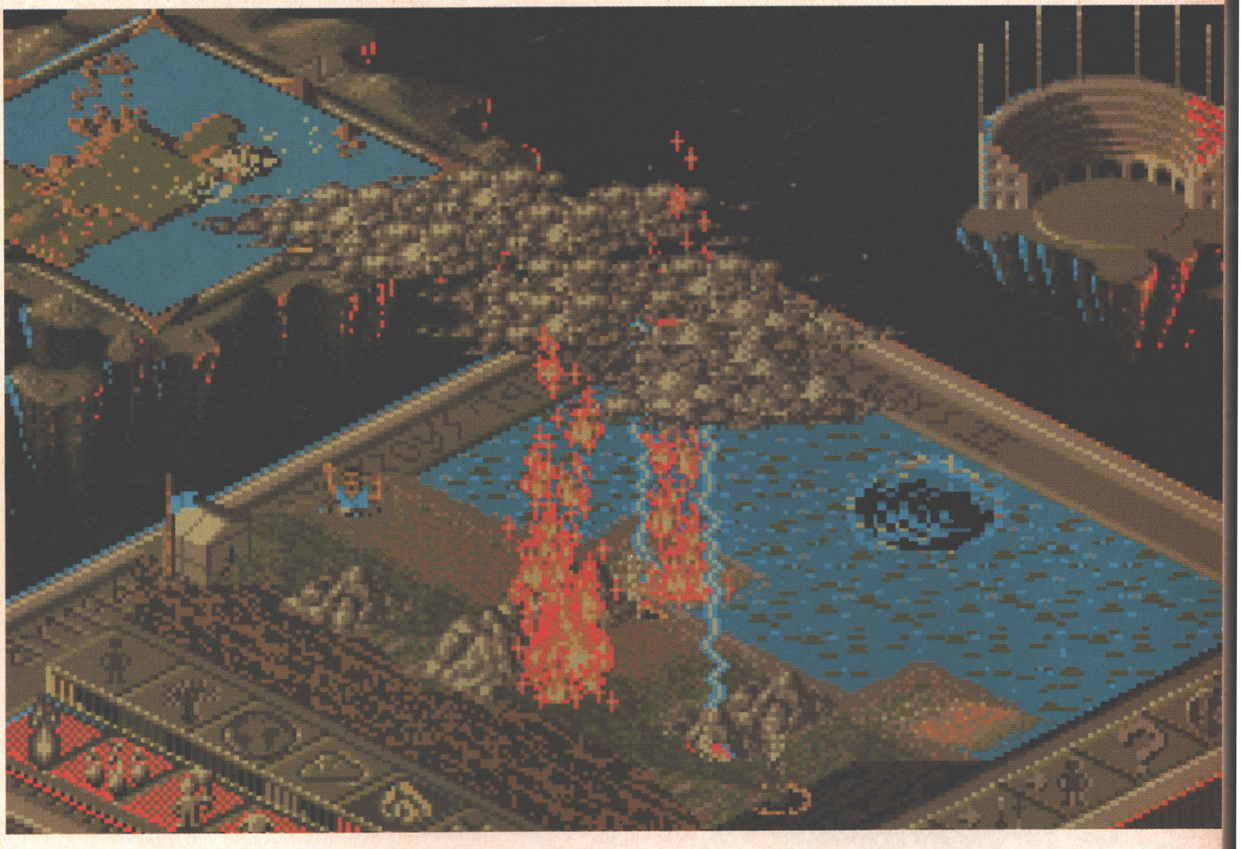
This time you find yourself back in Ancient Greece, where as one of the sons of Zeus himself, your aim is to achieve immortality and take your place next to him on Mount Olympus.

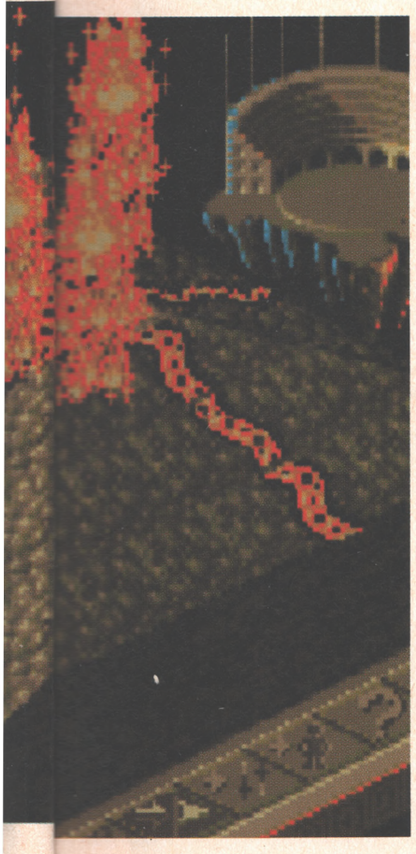
But the old boy isn't going to let you have your way without an almighty fight and he's conscripted 32 of his most powerful deities to stand in the way of your ambitions.

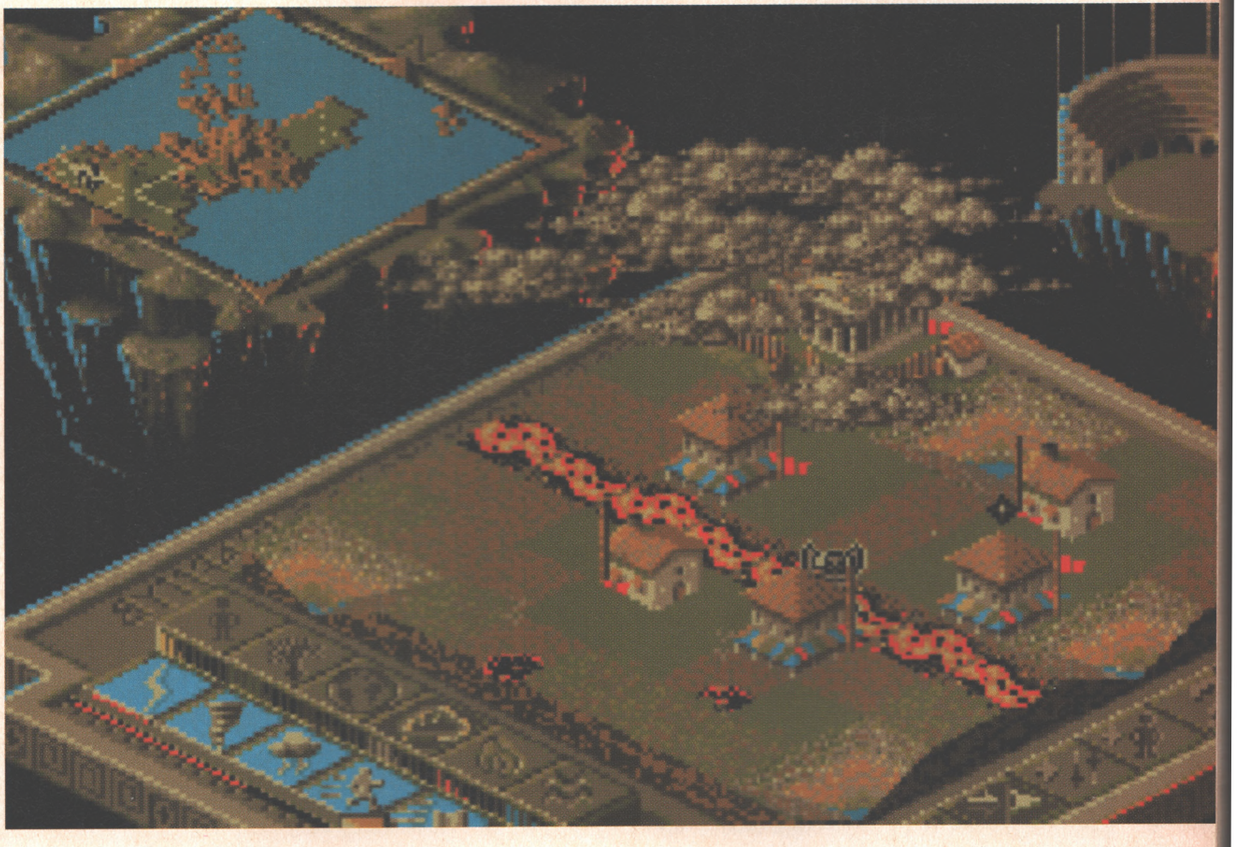
Design your own elaborate settlements with grand houses, roads and trees. Construct city walls in preparation against the oncoming rains of fire, whirlwinds, bolts of lightning and new, especially devious monsters like the foxy Helen of Troy, who leads people to their death with her beauty.

Populous II has 1000 worlds to conquer, 1MB of graphics, 5,000 animations, dozens of new sound effects and a mind-blowing sound track.

To celebrate it's release, you can also collect special Populous II T-shirts, mugs, data disks and interactive clue books from The World of Populous II which you will find in participating retailers.







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TRUE STORIES

READ THIS BIT LAST!

● Alright, alright, so you came to this bit first. Fine. Now go back and read what all the softies have to say about Christmas Number Ones (it's just underneath there) and come back when you've finished. (They know loads more about what's going to be a hit and what's not than we do, honest).

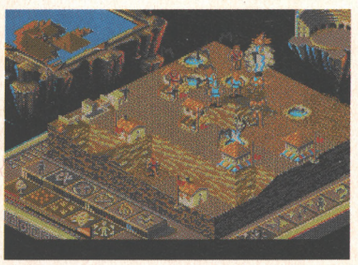
● Right, here we are then. Just time for a quick run around the office to see what we personally think'll 'do the business':

Mark Ramshaw: "*Smash TV*, because it appeals to the lowest denominator."
Stuart Campbell: "*Oh no! More Lemmings*, simply because it's *Lemmings*."
Matt Bielby: "*Populous II*, because, well, because it's so eagerly awaited."
Amanda Cook: "*Lemmings*, because nearly everyone's got a copy of the first one."
Matthew Squires: "*Populous II*, because it's such a good game."

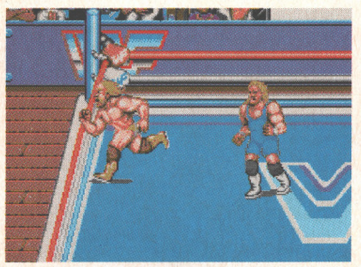
Of course, this doesn't necessarily mean we *want* all these games to do well...

WHAT'S GOING TO BE THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER ONE?

***Battle Isle* – "everybody wants it", according to Ubi Soft's Duncan Lowthian.**



***Populous II* – the EA and Gremlin choice, generally quite heavily favoured.**



"There can be no other No1 except for *WWF*," says a confident Jo Cooke (Ocean).

***Leander* – a game so good, it inspires people to write poetry about it(!)**

Ladies and gentlemen, place your bets...

It's all over now bar the counting. The adverts have been run, the reviews read, the hype generated and the games – those that have made it in time – have appeared on shop shelves up and down the country. The race for Christmas Number One has already been won – it's just that nobody knows who's done it *yet*. With that in mind we felt it was high time for a little bit of investigation of our own...

To the top right you'll see our own predictions, but first we thought it only fair (and interesting!) to ask a few software peeps where *they* think the wise cash is being splashed up and down the land. According to this lot at least, the race is wide open...

● Nobody's going to be making their fortune betting on this, that's for sure. Not even Ladbrokes are willing to take bets on it – according to their Paul Austin, they've had all sorts of enquiries about a Christmas Number One for Cliff Richard, but when we rang up to ask about the Amiga odds it was apparently "the first request ever" for a book to be run on computer games! There's not much call for one then? "No, but we would consider running a book on the Amiga if we had any knowledge of the marketplace". Oh well, it looks like it's back to an office sweepstake for us then...

● Over at Psygnosis, Nik Wilde is so sure that *Leander* is going to be the Christmas Number One that he's come up with a little poem about it...

"Christmas comes but once a year,
And every year it's grander,
This one will be the best of all,
'Cos you can buy *Leander*."

Erm, yes. Nice one, Nik.

● Mirrorsoft's Cathy Campos is rather more realistic about it all, recognising that there is no clear front runner this year. "I couldn't tell you which way it's going to go," she said, "it's fairly wide open. However, if I was a betting woman I would say Ocean's *WWF* has a strong chance, though if there's any justice in this world it will be *First Samurai*".

● *Formula One Grand Prix* is heavily backed by MicroProse (surprisingly enough), their Julia Coombs commenting that "there're no real front runners, but if people buy on quality alone then it's got to be *Formula One Grand Prix*." Hmm, I think we'd all agree it's certainly an outstanding game, but there are a few people over in the EA camp, say, who might think it has a rival in the quality stakes...

● Indeed, one of them is Electronic Arts' Simon Jeffery. *Populous II* gets his vote – no surprises there – and with the sort of reviews it's been getting (highest ever in AMIGA POWER!) it looks like lots of people might agree. Interestingly, Simon also thinks that if Ocean had managed to get the long-awaited *Epic* out before Christmas it could have been in with a very strong chance.

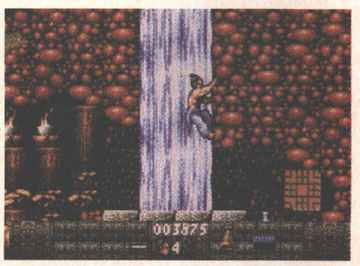
● Duncan Lowthian from Ubi Soft strongly favours "*Battle Isle*, because everybody wants it and it's a very good quality product – the type of game that not only appeals to strategy specialists but also action wargamers." Hmm, and we actually prefer the Ubi's *Celtic Legends* ourselves...

● At Gremlin Ian Richardson also heavily favours *Populous II*. He thinks that "apart from that there is only *WWF* from Ocean. They're the real contenders." Well, maybe Ian, but we'd also reckon that if your own *Lotus 2* manages to keep up anything like its current rate of demand there'll still be a place for it in the top ten.

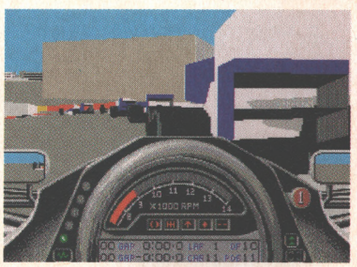
● Domark are hoping that *Pit-Fighter*, *Rugby – The World Cup* and *Super Space Invaders* will come through for them, especially in the light of their *Rugby* sell-out at the World Of Commodore show. Well, maybe, though haven't this lot been in the shops a mite too long for any real hope of success..?

● And so we come to Ocean, who it seems (in most people's view anyway) offer the only real challenge to *Populous II*. According to their Jo Cooke "there can be no other number one except for *WWF*," and beyond that "Ocean will supply the first three placings with *The Simpsons* at number two and *Terminator 2* at number three". What about *Smash TV* then, Jo?

And there we have it. The general consensus would seem to be a neck and neck finish between *Populous 2* and *WWF* – but the field's wide open, but you certainly can't discount the new *Lemmings* data disk. Next issue – the winner(s)!



***First Samurai* – the Mirrorsoft choice, and definitely a deserving contender.**



"On quality alone it's got to be *F1 Grand Prix*" – Julia Coombs, MicroProse.

***Pit-Fighter* – peaked too early, and let's be honest, is it really number one material..?**

***Oh no! More Lemmings* – two versions and *plenty* of good will, equals chart success?**

Why's it called The Bug? Can't you see it's little eyes, it's mouth...(etc)

WIN! FIVE FAB BUG JOYSTICKS!

You may have seen this bizarre little joystick in the mag last issue – called The Bug, it's a new hand held model from Cheetah and (truth be told) it's really rather good. Perhaps a bit fiddly for players with big hands, it's certainly a lot more comfortable than previous hand-held models, and has proved to be an office favourite – particularly for those occasions where desk space is so limited that big, clumpy joysticks tend to get in the way. Two Bugs used side-by-side have proved to be the only feasible way of reproducing the arcade control of *Smash TV* (see review this issue) too.

Anyway, to celebrate we've got a competition – five Bugs accompanied by nifty black Bug t-shirts to the lucky winners, and five more T-shirts for the runners up. To enter, simply name:

1) The star of the remake of *The Fly*.
2) The star of *The Fly* 2.
3) The Cinemaware game with giant bugs in it.

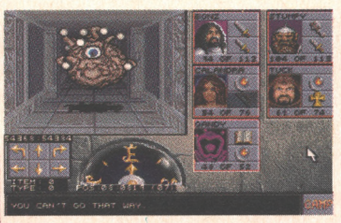
COMPETITION

Easy, eh? And the next bit couldn't be simpler either. Just send your answers on the back of an envelope or postcard to Fly In My Eye Compo, AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW, and make sure they're with us by January 31st ('cos that's when we'll be pulling the entries out of the AMIGA POWER hat!)

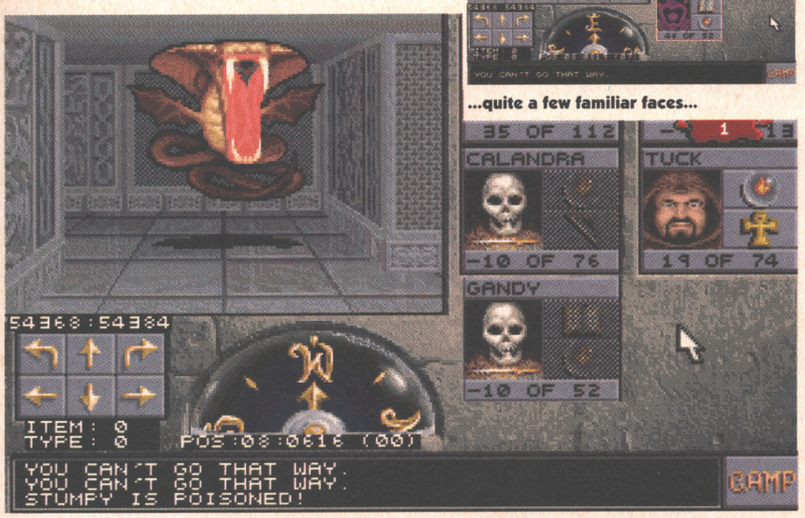
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2 – IT'S COMING!

What you see here are PC screen shots, the Amiga version isn't due until next February or March – but when it comes, it'll blow your socks off. Improvements over the original fantasy role-playing classic include intelligent monsters (who actually roam in packs, split off and even nick objects!), greater character interaction, and a lot more variation in the locations. The game begins in the forest outside Darkmoon castle, with the action soon progressing to the castle catacombs, and up into the towers. Prepare to fight like never before – *EOTB2* lets you control more powerful characters, and consequently the monsters are more varied and much more powerful. Forget Beholders – those crummy little nasties are small fry in this game! Don't miss this touch of evil, next Easter.

***EOTB II* includes outdoor action...**



...quite a few familiar faces...



... and rather a massive amount of new (and especially super-evil) nasties to kill (or get killed by).

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER DEPARTMENT

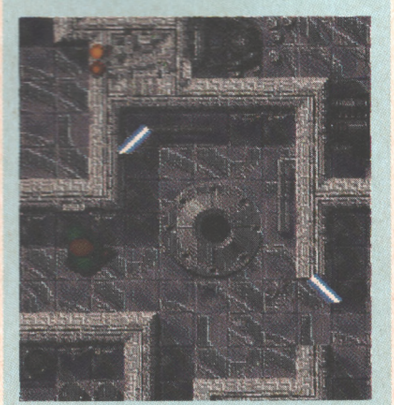
That's where Ocean's *Epic* belongs, a long overdue and, well, 'epic' space adventure. Started in February 1989 it combines elements of *Starglider* and (especially) Origin's *Wing Commander* with the plot of TV show Battlestar Galactica and the sheer beauty of a Star Wars. Some of the prettiest intro graphics yet – heavily drawing on the imagery of Buck Rogers/Galactica/ Star Wars and countless special effect spectaculars – lead into a mission based space shoot-'em-up with knobs on. We'd say look for the full review next issue – except we've no way of telling whether it'll be finished by then or not – so instead let's just cross our fingers and hope, eh..?

CRIB SHEETS

Time to take an in-depth (well, in-depthish) look at another unsuspecting software house. After a bit of thought, it's the turn of the Wakefield new boys...

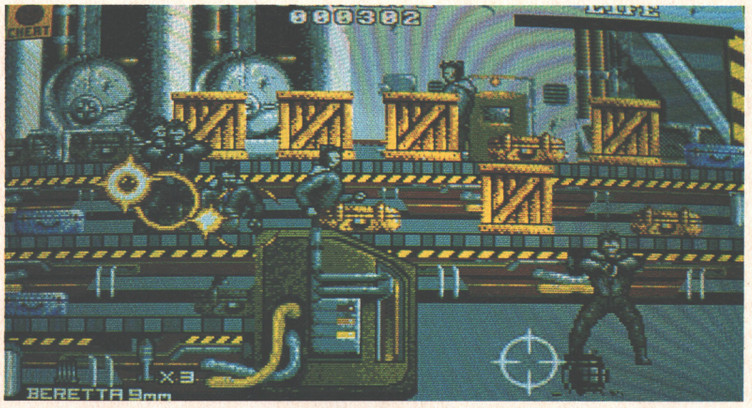
TEAM 17

Contact: Team 17, 2/8 Market Street, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 1DH.
History: Formed as a software publishing house in December 1990. *Full Contact*, an interesting budget kung fu game, was their first release, while currently the full price *Alien Breed* is doing well for them thank-you-very-much, currently residing in the charts at number two. Founders and directors of the company are Martyn Brown and Michael Robinson.
People: Team 17 employ 10 full time staff, seven of whom are directly involved in the development of software. Best known among the creative staff are Andreas Tadic, a programmer, and graphic artist Rico Holmes, both of whom worked on *Alien Breed* with Peter Tulebey and German PD star Tobias Richter.
Greatest Success: In the words of Martyn Brown "*Alien Breed* is the best thing so far," though of course there's not been much to choose between yet. That's all soon to change though – due for release within the month is a new shoot-'em-up, mysteriously dubbed *Project X*, though this will have changed by release. It's an arcade style game in the same mould as *R-Type* and *Nemesis*, but that's all we know for now...
Greatest Failure: "There have been no failures as yet and we don't intend to have any," says Brown. Ah, it's easy to say that *now*...
Typical Team 17 game: According to Brown, "we'd like to think that we can produce games that do justice to what Amiga owners can technically expect from their machines," though, of course, the style will continue to be strictly "arcade action rather than strategy."
How do they see themselves: "We do things very differently to how everyone else does them," says Brown. "The team is unique because the people employed by Team 17 have all come from other, different areas of the industry."
How do other people see them: "There is a lot of response from the end users which at the end of the day is what we're looking for," says Brown. "Basically we're quite oblivious to how the rest of the industry sees us".
Final word: All Martyn Brown has to say (in his teasing sort of a way) is "stay tuned".



Team 17's second release – *Alien Breed* is one of the slickest Amiga games yet.

THE NATURAL



It's *Op Wolf* with snow and, erm, suitcases(?) – *Die Hard II* in traditional film game shock!

You'd think the original Die Hard licence would have gone to Ocean, wouldn't you – there's hardly ever been a film itching for action game treatment in quite the same way – but no, Activision got it, produced a poor PC version in the States, and never quite got round to finishing off the Amiga conversion. You'd think Die Hard II would have gone to Ocean too, but no – Grandslam Video got it this time, and are finishing off an Amiga version even as we speak. The game's their version of the traditional multi-part arcade jobbie, set over five levels and including a snow mobile chase, a fight on the wing of a moving 747 and an assortment of between-level sub-games. Programmed by Tiertex, it even features that old standby, the *Operation Wolf* game, as hero John McClane dashes around a snow-locked airport fighting off an assortment of well armed, and suitably homicidal, baddies. Look for the full review next issue and a release, with luck, any day now.

Oh dear...

It's back! Everyone's favourite column of constructive criticism...

E-SWAT (US Gold)

One of the most over-used comments in a reviewer's vocabulary is "It's a great conversion, but the arcade game was a bit of a duffer in the first place, so it's not all that much fun". What a refreshing change, then, to come across a coin-op conversion which that worn phrase just doesn't apply to. *E-SWAT* (Enhanced Special Weapons And Tactics, acronym fans) was a Sega arcade game along the same lines as *Rolling Thunder* – never a world-beater but entertaining enough in its own right. *E-SWAT* the Amiga game saw the software-buying public presented with a glorious farrago of ineptitude the like of which hadn't been seen since about 1988. In retrospect it's difficult to see where the programmers could have gone wrong with such embarrassingly basic source material to work from, but go wrong they did – and in spectacular style. Hideous, wooden graphics jittered their way across half-finished backdrops as the elite paramilitary policemen of the title sleepwalked around the screen pumping bullets into the bad guys at rates of anything up to, ooh, 20 a minute.

Worse still, though, was the incredibly temperamental collision detection – sometimes, if you walked right up to, and indeed into, a baddie

Especially Sad With Added Tackiness – a much more fitting acronym for *E-SWAT*.

the collision detection would notice that he'd hit you and you'd lose a life. And, erm, sometimes it wouldn't.

Still, if you weren't moved by the tender and touching scenes at the end when the girl who'd just been rescued rushed towards the hero, only to totally ignore him in her emotionally-traumatised state and hug the life out of the crate he was standing on, then you're a hardened cynic indeed. And if you're the kind of unspeakably snide trainspotter who notices that the title of this game is an anagram of WASTE, then all we can say is that it's not big or hard or clever to insult games that those poor people worked so hard on. We mean, it's not as if they got *paid* for it...

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN!

Domark have been one of the declining number of companies to stick with a steady diet of coin-op conversions over the past year, but all looks set to change in '92. "We've probably suffered for it, to be honest," says Sales Manager John Kavanagh, "the market seems to have moved much more towards original products, and that's the direction we'll be heading in for the next year too."

The line up is an interesting one too – as well as *Shadowlands* and the new *Harrier* sim (mentioned in these pages before) there's *Columbus*, a gigantic exploration-cum-management game (from the team behind this year's interesting *'Nam*) which puts you in the shoes of the famous explorer. Your job is to equip your expedition, set sail for the Americas, and once there set up colonies – setting sail East is presumably not advised!

An audacious project, but perhaps not quite as bold as the one to breath life into the football management genre, another task Domark have set themselves for '92. "With the exception of owners Dom and Mark, everyone at Domark is really into football, so it's great we're working on two soccer games at the moment," says Kavanagh. "There's our conversion of the *European Football Championship* coin-op, but perhaps a bit braver is our *Championship Manager*. We're really looking forward to seeing how this one turns out." Yep, us too!

AS SEEN ON TV

CYBERPUNK GAMES SHOW FOR CHANNEL FOUR

GAMESMASTER

It's happened at last – computer games are to get their own dedicated TV show! The Gamesmaster series of weekly half hour shows has been commisioned by Channel Four from producers Hewland International – the vast bulk of them were recorded in November in a disused East End church ruin, much of the budget of the show spend on decking out the surroundings in suitably Mad Max-influenced cyberpunk style. Look out for them on Tuesday evenings at 6.30 pm, with the first one scheduled for the 7th January.

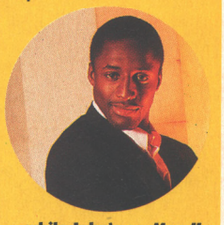
Barry plays *Final Blow*...

So what exactly does the show hope to accomplish? We bent the ear of Dave Perry, spokesman for Hewland International: "It's here to offer advice and guidance to the novice as well as valuable insights for the more experienced player. Three games playing challenges will form the core of each programme, two of which will bring in audience members for head-to-head or individual challenges. 'Celebrity Challenge' will be the third game bringing in interesting personalities from the world of sport and entertainment. The first show, for instance, will feature Emlyn Hughes and John Fashnu playing a special version of *Manchester United Europe*. Another we've lined up has boxers Barry McGuigan and Gary Mason challenging each other at *Final Blow*."

And that's not all though, apparently! Soap stars like Neighbours' Ashley Paske (who plays Matt Robinson, apparently) will be taking on all comers at Impulze's forthcoming *Neighbours* game.

So why is such a programme being launched now? Back to Dave: "Quite simply, the computer games industry is ready for a successful television programme. Even top quality software magazines are unable to give a real on-screen impression of the software, which is something we can manage quite easily. We hope through what is a mainly visual medium to give the gaming world the boost it needs and introduce this interactive form of home entertainment to a wider audience."

And what about the style of the show? "It will be a calculated mix of gothic imagery and techno frenzy. A cyber-punk Top of the Pops if you like. The 'Gamesmaster' himself will be a computer generated overlord, the ultimate god of computer gaming who does not tolerate fools lightly. He is to be the show's main character and will appear via a huge video screen linked to cyber-space, though there'll be human presenters amongst the audience as well."



...while John's on *Man U.*

That's not the best of it though! Our very own Neil West was auditioned and accepted as a 'resident expert', commenting on the various games when needed. Keep your eyes peeled for him!

Brides Of Dracula

In the depths of Translyvania lies the castle of the Eccentric Egomaniac Vampire Superstar Count Dracula. In his never ending quest to prove what a guy he is to all his chums, he's decided to get seriously married. He already had a tip off that the nearby village of Bistritz is home to some thirteen particularly foxy chicks - just the number he was looking for!

"Only Gonzo Games could take what seems to be a sensible plot - mix it with Monty Pythonesque humour and twist it around until it is beyond recognition - and still bring off the idea superbly. That's exactly what Gonzo has done so expect the unexpected"
Atari ST User Star rating
Accolade 92%

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AT LAST! JOHN MADDEN AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Simon Jeffery (he's the small one in the suit) and some of his American Football chums!

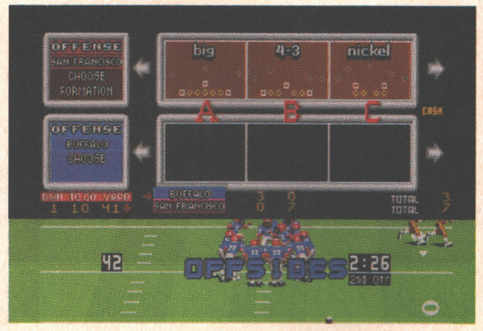
Now this really is something to keep an eye out for! Generally recognised as one of the best ever games on the Sega Mega Drive console, it's destroyed more work time around these offices than just about anything else over the past eight months – and that's without even appearing on the Amiga! Now that we're due a version of it by early February at the latest, the chances of AMIGA POWER ever getting out on time start to look ridiculously small...

So, the Amiga version. How's it different to the Mega Drive game that many of you will be familiar with? Well, it's been programmed in the UK by Gary Roberts, an in-house programmer at Electronic Arts – "We hardly do any Amiga products in the US anymore," says EA's Simon Jeffery, "programmers in the UK simply do a better job" – and heavily modified to suit the computer. The graphics are enhanced for a start, with the sprites rather less cartoony than on the console model, while 350 frames of animation ensure the players can do just about everything their real life counterparts get up to. Single player mode has been toughened up a bit too – in the Mega Drive game you could often finish a game using passing plays almost exclusively, but with this one you'll have to put a fair number of running plays in too.

It's at around this point, of course, that the non-American Football fans amongst you will start to get a bit unstuck. Yes, American Football *is* a dauntingly difficult game to get your mind around at first – something Simon Jeffery is the first to admit. "There are 100 plays in the game, which are set ways of moving the ball up the pitch, so yes, it can look a bit of a nightmare, but it's surprising how many keen *John Madden* fans on the Mega Drive knew nothing about the real game before they played our version. That was certainly the case for me – *John Madden's* sort of dragged me into the game, and now I go every time the London Monarchs play! The manual *does* teach you how all the plays work, but really, once you know the basics you're pretty much away."

Structurally the game keeps faithful to the league system of the real thing without letting it get in the way of the action. You can play a sudden death league, a regular league, pro league or individual games, based around the NFL rules but featuring teams from the Eastern, Western and Central leagues. All the big professional teams from across the country are featured – each in their correct strips – and though there are individual player stats, real individuals aren't reproduced as such. Instead the game admits to some teams being defensively strong, say, or good attacking teams, and leaves it at that.

So there we have it. The game will work on half meg machines, cost £25.99 and is the nearest thing to a sure fire 1992 hit we've seen yet. Start counting the days...



Now this gets tricky. Do we try and explain exactly what's going on in these screens in this little bits of space...

...or do we just let you take a wild old guess at it? Hmm. Well, okay, starting in the pic above, we have (*Snip! -Ed*)

VAMP!

Vampire fans have been ill-treated by games creator's recently – but no longer! Gonzo's *Brides Of Dracula* features an intro sequence based on the Hammer horror films, the humour of Monty Python (just check out Van Helsing's silly walk!), a two player option (one window shows the movement of Drac, the other of vampire hunter Van Helsing), and 13 (count 'em, 13!) virgin brides to bite!

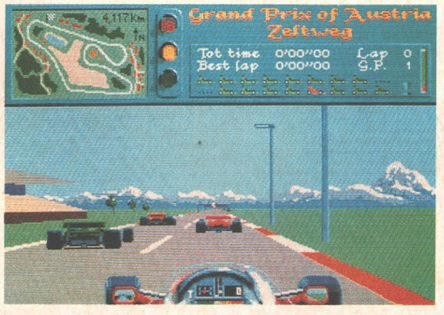
With 'full width screens' (wow!), levels taking in a village, forest, swamp, graveyard and the grounds of Drac's castle, plenty of arcade-style puzzles and screens populated by bats, zombies and mad woodcutters (amongst others), this should prove to be classically simple arcade-style fun. Watch out for the review next issue, but 'til then – sleep with the light on!

***Brides of Dracula* features a split screen display, with separate windows for Drac and Van Helsing.**

MEET THE STARS!

As reported last month, selected HMV stores have started selling computer games again. Supporting this, London's 150 Oxford Street store has been running meet-the-programmer signing sessions, attended by the likes of Core Design with *Heimdall*, Storm with *Double Dragon III* and *Final Blow*, the Bitmaps with *The Chaos Engine* and so on. They don't stop there though – early buyers of AMIGA POWER might just have time to make Tony Crowther's *Knightmare* session on Saturday 21st December, while 'love-ins' on *Ultima VII* (with creator Lord British/Richard Garriot), the new *Star Trek* and others are planned in the forseeable future. Keep your eyes peeled...

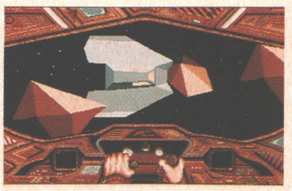
UBI-SOFT GET IT RIGHT...



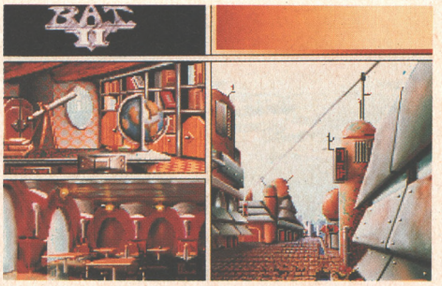
***Vroom* – ridiculous name, impressive game**

Who would have believed it of the Ubi's, eh? There we were, dismissing them for 'all rightish' releases like *Pick'n'Pile* and *Jupiter's Masterdrive*, when suddenly they come up with *Celtic Legends* and *Battle Isles* – two great games reviewed this month – followed by some of the most promising new projects we've seen lately. Next up is *BAT 2*, for instance, sequel to the popular cinematic adventure thingy *BAT*, but this time featuring 'improved dialogue', 'astonishing' graphics and 'a complete 3D-modelized planet system'. Lumme! With four (four!) flight simulators, a car race, gladiator and street fights and an arcade with three playable coin-up video games incorporated into the gameplay, you certainly get a lot for your money. Says spokeman Duncan Lowthian: "*BAT 1* was an incredibly deep and good value product and *BAT 2* will be even deeper and even better value for money". So there you go.

Very different, and out around March maybe, is *Vroom*, a traditional sprite based racing game currently earning rave reviews on the ST. Based on Formula One, it's apparently great fun in two player mode particularly (though you do have to connect a couple of computers). Interesting choice of name though...



***BAT 2* – you really can't deny it, it's a *very* good looking game.**

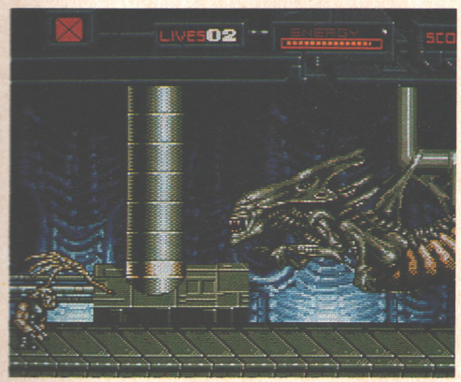


***BAT 2* – the question has to be, how will these very disparate sub-games link to form a satisfying whole?**

LOOKS FAMILIAR...

You know who 21st Century are, don't you? They're the ones who used to be Hewson, but since a bit of financial trouble (they went into liquidation) aren't any more. Their releases are proving to be decidedly Hewson-esque though – *Nebulus II* was (of course) the sequel to a well-known Hewson classic, while the upcoming *Deliverance: Stormlord II* is a (long awaited) conversion of one of their 1989 8-bit hits. In the meantime, though, there's this one – *Rubicon*, a seven level scrolling arcade adventure/shoot-'em-up thingie we should review next issue.

Scheduled for release in mid-January at £25.99, it's looking interesting if – dare we say it – very much the sort of thing Hewson used to release. Despite old Hewson creators like Raf Cecco and John Phillips disappearing to do other projects (Cecco most notably with the new *First Samurai*), a house-style is being maintained. The more things change, the more they stay the same, eh?



Dark, 'moody' graphics, familiar platform shoot-'em-up gameplay – it's Hew(oops) 21st Century's *Rubicon*.

NEW BREAK FOR JIMMY WHITE

Archer Maclean, the man behind *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, is cueing up a sequel to the green baize chart-topper.

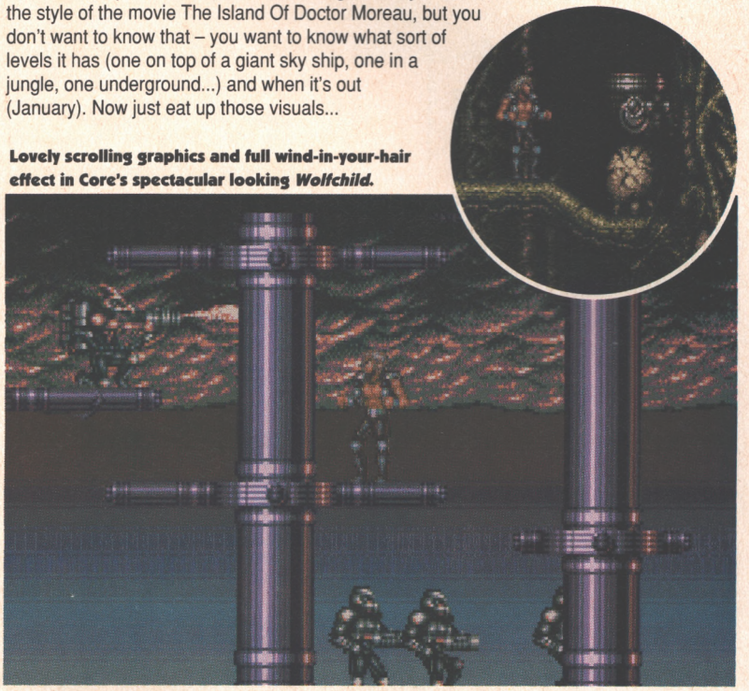
It's certainly good news for the many fans of the game who've been having a tough time trying to beat the computer opponents – Archer is planning to make adverseries that little bit easier second time round. There'll also be digitised speech supplied by a famous snooker commentator, loads of statistics, a new replay feature and a more sophisticated ball-line adjustor allowing for spin and top.

Don't hold your breath though – the game's still a good year away from launch, and there's no guarantee that it'll be backed by the *Jimmy White* name anyway.

WOLFMAN'S BACK!

We've already shown you a brief glance at this before – when Core's Simon Phipps took the 'If I'd Known Then...' hotseat – but here's *Wolfchild* in full (almost), and it's a stunner. A very fast moving parallax scrolling arcade adventure, featuring gameplay elements from both Phipps' earlier *Switchblade* and the coin-op *Strider* (amongst others), it sees the welcome return of special effects to Amiga games that really *are* something special. From a wind effect blowing the hero's hair (and himself backwards!) to guns blasting holes in the wall behind him to the brilliant man-to-werewolf transformation, it's one of the most spectacular fast arcade blasts we've seen in ages – visually on a par with the likes of *First Samurai*, though much more an arcade experience than a true arcade adventure.

And the plot? Well, it's all to do with genetic hybridization in the style of the movie The Island Of Doctor Moreau, but you don't want to know that – you want to know what sort of levels it has (one on top of a giant sky ship, one in a jungle, one underground...) and when it's out (January). Now just eat up those visuals...



Lovely scrolling graphics and full wind-in-your-hair effect in Core's spectacular looking *Wolfchild*.

AMIGA POWER RECOMMENDS

AMIGA POWER selects the richest pickings from this winter's current games crop – is *yours* here?

POPULOUS II (Electronic Arts)

Populous was one of the Amiga's greatest games of all time, but many people doubted Bullfrog's ability to alter and improve on it significantly enough to justify a sequel. To see just how wrong they were, take a look at the depth of the gameplay on display here, marvel at the absolutely luscious look of it all, then sit back and watch the critics eat their words.

FIRST SAMURAI (Image Works)

Huge disk-accessing pauses are the bane of Amiga gamers, but the total lack of them is just the least significant of the endless list of good things about this game. Strikingly original sound, big levels, carefully-designed gameplay, and a massive sense of atmosphere are just a few more. For a complete list, buy the game and discover them for yourself.

SCOOBY DOO AND SCRAPPY DOO (Hi-Tec)

If you took most of the best points of *The Blues Brothers*, *Chuck Rock*, *Magic Pockets* and the *Mario* console games and chucked them all into one package, gave it cartoon graphics, addictive platform action and a task big enough to keep you at it for weeks, would you expect to put it out at £7.99? Buy it quickly before Hi-Tec realise their mistake.

HEIMDALL (Core Design)

This kind of RPG adventure thing has been done many times before without mainstream success, but Core aim to put that right with a user-friendly and aesthetically gorgeous game of epic proportions. So big you'll need a diving bell to get to the bottom of it, *Heimdall* is still accessible enough to get into straight away – a recipe for success in anyone's book.

RUGBY – THE WORLD CUP (Domark)

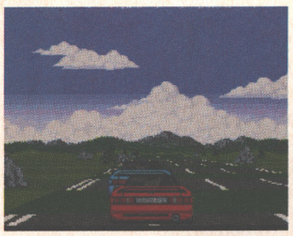
It doesn't impress technically, and fanatics will complain about the over-simplification of the rules, but no game was played as much in the office last month as this one. Fast-moving and exhausting, with the emphasis on arcade-paced action and serious joystick waggling, *Rugby – The World Cup* is all about fun and that suits us fine.

MICROPROSE GOLF (MicroProse)

While it's not absolutely perfect, and probably not quite up to the standard of *PGA Tour*, it's still a hell of a product. Stunning 3D graphics and a wealth of moving camera options give it an absolutely gorgeous look, the golf game itself just about managing to keep up. The game every 28-handicap hacker will be keen to get his hands on.

POLE POSITION FOR GREMLIN'S TURBO 2

Lotus Turbo Challenge 2
(New entry, No 1)
Despite being launched at the peak of a mad rush of driving games, *Turbo 2* – from Sheffield based veterans Gremlin Graphics – has entered the, if you will, 'grid' at pole position. No surprise, then, that they've been cracking open the bubbly ever since. In the words of Ian Richardson, Gremlin's Marketing Manager, "We're over the moon. What we did with *Turbo Challenge* in twelve months we've done in just



***Turbo 2* – life in the fast lane, straight in at pole position (etc)**

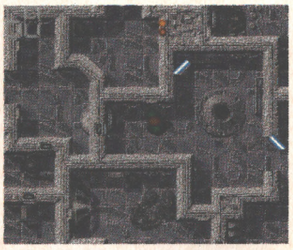
over two weeks with *Turbo Challenge 2*! Distribution wise, it's probably the biggest ship out title since *Turtles* last year!"

Gremlin have certainly been busy. It's overtime city up in Sheffield apparently – they've already had to turbocharge their printers to reprint the box three times for the Amiga version alone! So any plans for a *Lotus 3*?

"It's not confirmed, but we *are* looking to do one," offered Richardson. "We'll go back to the track idea, this time allowing you to design your own. It'll be a bit different from *1* and *2*, but hopefully combine the best parts of both – we'll look closely at criticisms of the first two before going ahead with it though".

TEAM 17 – A 'BREED' APART

Alien Breed
(New entry, No 2)
Team 17 aren't going to let this success go to their heads – far from it, they're quite laid back



***Alien Breed* – the sequel promises even more thrills'n'spills...**

about the whole affair. The independent Wakefield team certainly don't seem to take themselves too seriously – "our main aim is just to please the end users," says boss Martin Brown, "we don't care much what the rest of the industry thinks."

They certainly seem to have pleased lots of you with their *Gauntlet*-esque *Alien Breed*, what with it entering the charts at No 2 and all. "Yes, it's good, we're very, very pleased," offers Brown, "it's just that we don't shout and scream like other software houses". It would seem not – *Alien Breed* fans might though, when they learn that a sequel is definitely in the pipeline for release at the end of next year.

AMIGA POWER GALLUP CHARTS
AMIGA TOP 100

····· Exceptional ····· Nearly there ···· Very good ··· Has its moments ·· Flawed · Dire

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2 (NE) ALIEN BREED Team 17 £24.99 ****
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6 (1) JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER Virgin £29.99 *****
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31 (36) SCOOBY DOO AND SCRAPPY DOO Hi-Tec Software £7.99 *****
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76 (46) MIAMI CHASE Code Masters £7.99 ****
77 (50) FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER Spectrum Holobyte (Mirrorsoft) £34.99 ****
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81 (NE) FOOTBALL DIRECTOR 2 D&H Games £24.99 **
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86 (NE) FACE OFF ICE HOCKEY Krisalis £25.99 ***
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89 (55) STRIKER MANAGER D&H Games £24.99 **
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91 (67) RUN THE GAUNTLET Hit Squad £7.99 *
92 (74) LAST NINJA 2 Hit Squad £7.99 **
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94 (NE) NITRO Sizzlers £7.99 ***
95 (35) CONQUEROR Kixx £7.99 ***
96 (84) 1943 Kixx £7.99 *
97 (NE) CHASE HQ Hit Squad £7.99 **
98 (NE) KNIGHTS OF THE SKY MicroProse £34.99 *****
99 (77) GREMLINS 2 Elite £24.99 **
100 (NE) FOOTBALL MANAGER Pocket Power £2.99 *****

We figure you must have some idea how the charts work by now, so briefly: they're put together by Gallup, they mix budgies and full pricers together, games are rated in stars, and they're © ELSPA.

MANIA HELD OFF AT NUMBER THREE

Mega lo Mania
(New entry, No 3)
It took Mirrorsoft two years to develop this highly entertaining god sim, and although it's been held to the No 3 spot by a couple of phenominally successful titles, we expect it to remain high in the Top Ten for quite some time – it could even make No 1 yet!

Alyson Stroud from Mirrorsoft's public relations department told us: "We're very pleased that *Mega lo Mania* has achieved such a high position, and

***Mega lo Mania* – sequel and data disk to come for popular god sim.**

we expect it to become a chart fixture for some time. We'd like to think so, anyway." Interest should certainly be maintained by the data disk due for release in April or May, not to mention *Mega lo Mania 2*, due at the end of '92.

RUGGER RUCKS IN AT NUMBER SEVEN

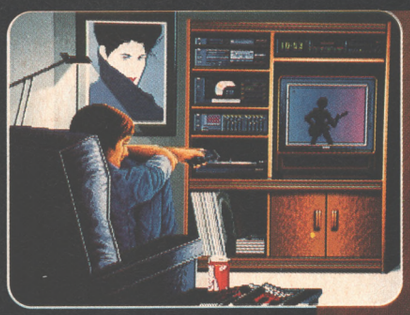
Rugby – The World Cup
(New entry, No 7)
The peeps with funny shaped balls at Domark are "very, very pleased", and who can blame them? They've come up with a highly entertaining game, and even managed to get it into the shops more or less at the height of Rugby World Cup fever.

So what's the history? Well, the game took seven months in development, but the actual concept (suggested by two keen rugby players at Domark) was thought up over a year ago. Brynn Gilmore, Domark's Marketing Manager, told us "the people who developed the concept were rugby fanatics so they knew what to aim for – enjoyment of the game rather than the technicalities. We knew a lot of people would buy it because of the great interest in rugby".

So what exactly makes the game so popular? "Playability and excitement is what makes you come back for more, I think – we'll be doing a *Rugby 2* because we firmly believe we've got the best rugby game on the market in terms of general appeal". And – for once – you won't hear any disagreement from this camp. ●

Ultima VI

The False Prophet



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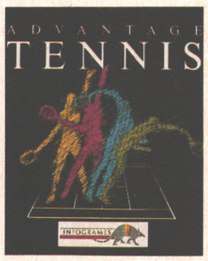
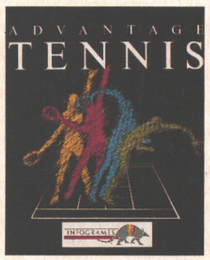


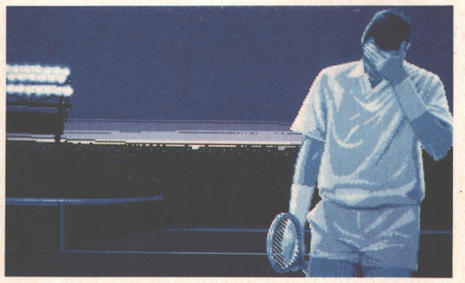
ADVANTAGE TENNIS

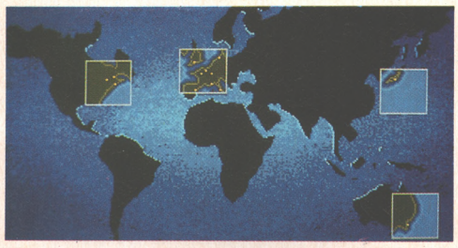


Monday, 3rd of November 1991 THE NEWSPAPER OF CHAMPION GAMES. ★ 1st year N# 000001

SIMPLY UNBEATABLE!

Another crushing victory for ADVANTAGE TENNIS over its rivals. Its indisputable technical superiority was proved last season on all surfaces. Like us, Tennis World is wondering if this year, there will be a player who is well trained enough to succeed in taking ADVANTAGE TENNIS' title and becoming Number 1.





A CHAMPION'S PORTRAIT

- 1 or 2 simultaneous players.
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- 3 game types: training, season or exhibition.
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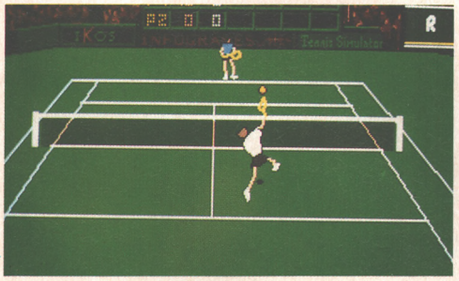
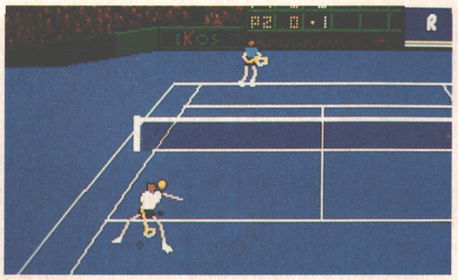
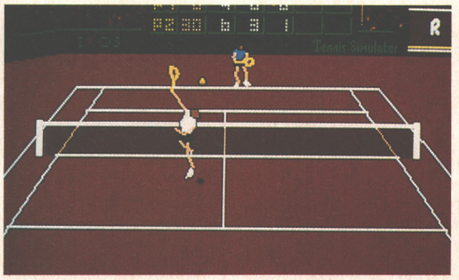
Fine! You have not given up. Your technical and mental qualities have made you Number 1 in the world ranking. Every winner deserves a medal. So if you're among the first 200 to send us a screen shot representing the first page of your press book proving that you have defeated ADVANTAGE TENNIS, you will get the badge ADVANTAGE TENNIS PLAYER NUMBER 1.



Marvellous high smash on the grass of Wimbledon.



Terrific between-the-legs-stroke on the synthetic surface of Tokyo.



Splendid backhand smash at the net on clay at Roland Garros.

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JUST WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE?

MATT BIELBY

It's that "What do you want for Christmas?" time of year again, and the 'team' have been trying to decide. A recent trip seems to have made quite an impression on Matt – he plumped for "everything the Codies have got..."
Matt's been playing: *Puggles, Oh no! More Lemmings, Bubble Dizzy*

LISA NICHOLLS

Lisa might be a simple girl in lots of ways, but the things she wants are anything but – "a new flat, a new life, new everything really – oh yes, and Amanda's fat black cat that she doesn't seem to want anymore."
Lisa's been playing: *Fast Food Dizzy*, "various other ones I can't remember the names of"

STUART CAMPBELL

He's not the greedy sort, our Stuart, but he wouldn't mind "A pre-release tape of the new BMX Bandits LP, a video of Chuck Jones cartoons, a ticket to a Gerry Sadowitz show, a *Go* set, a Wile E. Coyote cuddly toy and some peach schnapps by the fireside with Barbara Flynn."
Stuart's been playing: *First Samurai* (still), *Rodland* (still!), "this *Lemmings* thing"

NEIL WEST

Neil's been getting into trouble a bit lately – fighting trouble. "I don't know why," he tells anyone who'll listen, looking rather perplexed, "but every time I go anywhere with Matt, people tend to set about us." Matt confirms the story. So what do the two of them want for Christmas? Neil and Matt (together): "Bodyguards!"
Neil's been playing: *John Madden's* (Sega)

MARK RAMSHAW

Mark doesn't want much (ha!) – just "Béatrice Dalle, a year's supply of red wine, a box of Matchmakers, a *Smash TV* arcade machine – maybe Ocean will give me theirs – and, erm..." Don't bother thinking of anything else, Mark, that's plenty to be getting on with for now...
Mark's been playing: *Puggles, Smash TV*

JONATHAN DAVIES

Jonathan's wishes are simple – "I'd just like the AMIGA POWER team to take pity on me for once. Every time an obscure strategy game, odd foreign release or flight sim comes in, they give it to me for review. The odd light weight platform game would be nice too, you know."
Jonathan's been playing: "Strategy games!"

RICH PELLEY

Rich only wants a couple of things – to get away from school (he's still in the sixth form, the poor dear) and for his mum to buy a slightly less embarrassing car than her ancient Escort for him to tool around in. Sorry Rich, you're in no great danger of getting any of them!
Rich's been playing: truant

COLIN CAMPBELL

"I've been playing *PGA Tour* with my mates, a quid for each hole, and I lost £20 the last couple of nights, so better luck would be nice. (And while you're at it, I'd like snow for Christmas – I've a tenner on it you see...)"
Colin's been playing: *Knights Of The Sky, Puggles, PGA Tour Golf*

GARY PENN

Oh dear, Gary's in love. This is good news for Gary (and, presumably, the guilty young lady), but a bit of a disaster for the rest of us – we've not seen hide nor hair of the boy for weeks. Gary, where on earth are you?
Gary's been playing: the sort of games we can't write about in a family magazine like this one!

KARL FOSTER

New-boy Karl knows exactly what he wants – "a nice, big expensive thing." Yes, but *what* exactly? "A Synclavier – it's a kind of sampling keyboard system/music studio jobbie, and they cost about a quarter of a million pounds." Anyone feeling generous? Eh? Eh?
Karl's been playing: *Secret Weapons* (PC)

AMANDA COOK

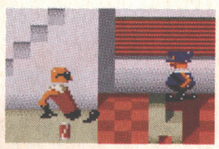
Amanda wants a new (new!) car – her current Honda CRX is, to be frank, bloody quick, but it's an ex-race car, and lacks such niceties as sound proofing and rear seats. "Now I want a new CRX VTEC model – get me that and I'll have everything I need."
Amanda's been playing: *Fast Food Dizzy*

MATTHEW SQUIRES

Our new staffie Matthew's a decisive sort of a chap. "A swing in a hammock with Felicity Kendal, a crate of Jameson's Irish Whiskey and an Aston Martin DB6. Oh yes, and an evening with Jamie Lee Curtis. Erm – that's not too much to ask for, is it?" Don't hold your breath...
Matthew's been playing: *Fuzzball, Smash TV*

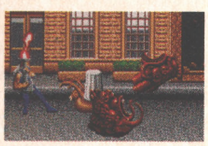
GAMES

So many games, and SO LITTLE TIME – what's a poor buyer to do, eh? Well, he could do a lot worse than check out this month's AMIGA POWER reviews section – it's packed with more (and more varied) reviews than, erm, a very packed thing. There's something for everyone here too – the mammoth flight sim *Birds Of Prey* or the INTERESTING WARGAME VARIANTS *Battle Isle, Celtic Legends* and *Realms* for the more 'cerebral' game players, the mindless arcade violence of a *Smash TV* for the more bloodthirsty amongst you. And then there are all the games that take the middle ground – violence orientated with a bit of thinking (*Barbarian II, Bonanza Bros*), thinking orientated with a bit of violence (*Knightmare, Moonstone*) and so on. And not forgetting the TRIUMPHANT RETURN of one of last season's most spectacular hits in *Oh no! More Lemmings*.



Tealeafs ahoy – the *Bros*.

And that's not all – we've not even started to mention *Deathbringer, Alien Storm, Cisco Heat* and the rest in the second review section towards the back of the mag (page 92), this month's budget challengers (page 105) and the best of the current crop of PD games (page 111). All human life is here...



My, that's a big weapon!

THE AMIGA POWER SCORING SYSTEM (AND HOW IT WORKS): AN EASY-TO-USE BEGINNERS GUIDE

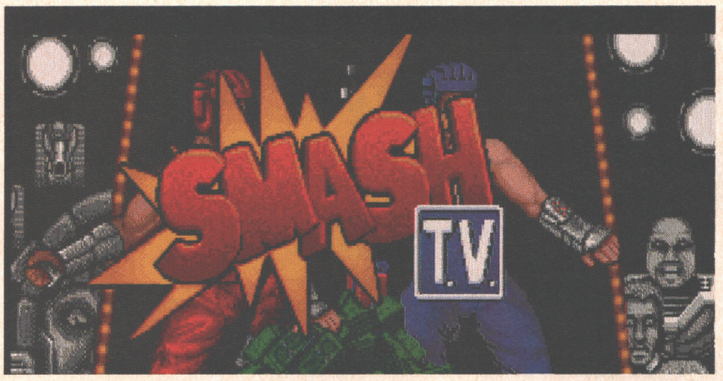
The AMIGA POWER reviewing philosphy is an absolute doddle to understand. Really, it's simple. But hey, some of you are reading this bit, so you must be at least a *mite* confused. Here, then, is a brief run-down on the ins and outs of it, layman style.

1) We're painfully aware of how much software costs, which is why we believe a game has to be *really* good to be worth buying – *or* worth giving a good mark. Happily, there's more than enough worthwhile stuff around if only you can find it – pointing you in the right direction is one reason AMIGA POWER exists. That's why we mark as hard as we do – we believe it's the only way to tell you if a game's worth buying...

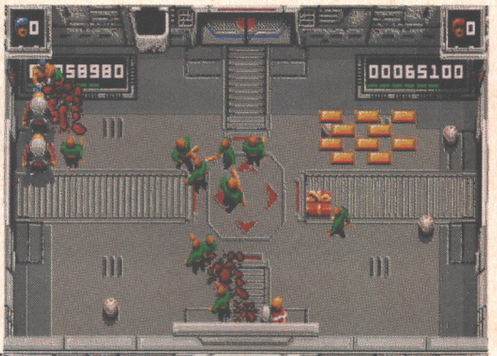
2) We believe rating systems should be simple and easy to understand. That's why we just give one mark out of 100, a few summing up sentences, and that's it. Who needs more?

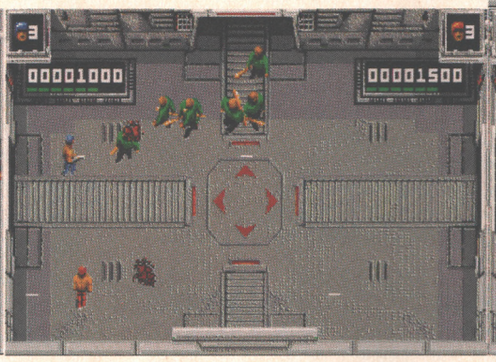
3) What, a third point? Don't believe in them!

Smash TV – quite possibly the most violent arcade game ever, and one of the few to make _Line Of Fire_ et al look like pillow fights. Brought to you by Williams – the makers of _Robotron_, _Joust_, _Defender_, _Stargate_, and other classics of yesteryear – _Smash TV_ sees the shoot-'em-up taken to extremes. It's the slaughterfest to end them all – and now Ocean have brought it to the Amiga.

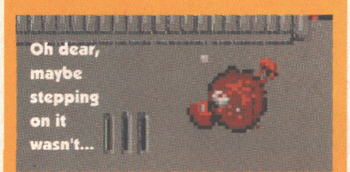


The bloodiest, most violent





SOLE MINING



SMAS

Game: Smash TV
Publisher: Ocean
Price: £25.99
Author: ZZKJ for Probe
Release: Out now

Big money, big prizes. Yep, the stakes sure are high these days when it comes to arcade conversions. *Take Smash TV*, arguably (and as far as I'm concerned, certainly) the best arcade game of the past few years. No surprises to find Ocean with the licence, but more of a shock to find conversion duties being handled by 3D driving game supremo ZZKJ.

I'll come clean right now, and admit that for me the release of the Amiga version of Williams' ultimate slaughterfest was just as important as any of those more brain-based classics like *Mega lo Mania*, *Monkey Island* and *Eye Of The Beholder*. It may be the most single-minded, dumb and violent game around – but it's also one of the best (and that's probably got a lot to do with all the aforementioned traits).

The basic gist of the game (for anyone who hasn't been to an arcade in the last three years) is that TV sports have become increasingly violent to meet the demands of viewers. The violence and the ratings rise until one show becomes an all-

ZZKJ: TOTAL CARNAGE – HE LOVES IT

ZZKJ – ex-computer journalist and games hacker, reclusive programmer, and now author of the Amiga version of *Smash TV*. Who better to ask about the trials and tribulations of the conversion, and to answer the question: "Just why isn't it the same as the arcade machine?"

To kick off, how long did the Amiga conversion take?

Too long!

It seems like we've been waiting forever for a new ZZKJ game.

A few deals fell through between this one and *Super Monaco*, which is why there's been such a long delay. I actually started *Smash TV* in April or May, but it took so long because the graphics weren't ready in time.

Are you a big fan of the *Smash TV* coin-op yourself?

No, I'd never seen, played or heard of it. I was sent a video of the game being played though, and thought – yeah – that would be fun. Anything but another driving game.

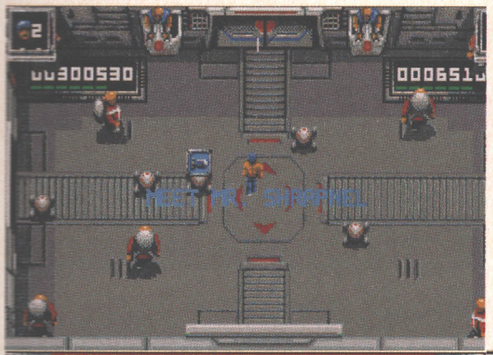
And how pleased are you with the finished result?

It's not too bad. I'm not too dissatisfied with it. I'm never happy with a finished product, though. After all, I am the author of the thing.

Was it your intention to merely create a playable interpretation, or were you out to make as close a conversion as possible?

I wanted something as playable as possible, but also as close to the original as the machine would allow. I think that people who enjoy playing the arcade machine will enjoy playing my version, though it's obviously not identical. To be honest, I under-estimated the complexity of the arcade

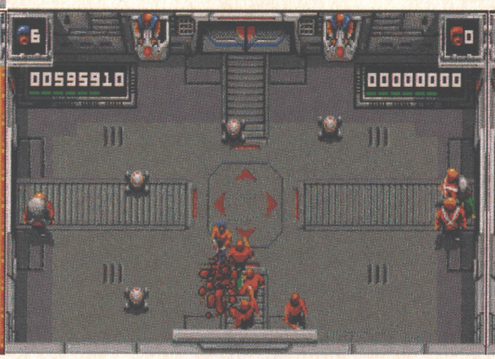
most senseless arcade machine in history – and now it's on the Amiga. Get ready for total carnage!

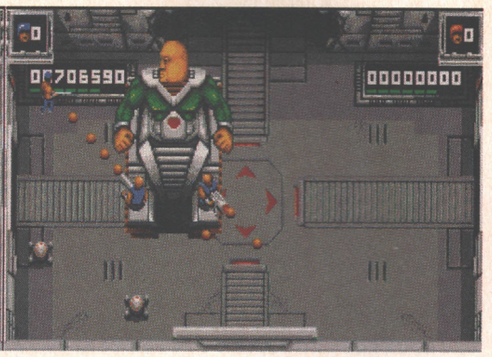


EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE

Here we see just one of the possible routes to Mutoid Man, the first End-Of-Level Guardian. From the main stage, it's swiftly into the first arena, where Big Guys With Clubs are the only baddies to worry about. Things swiftly get nasty with the introduction of Mr Shrapnels (exploding fat guys), gun emplacements, tanks, and lots of mines, but it's not all work work work, as the fifth arena offers the chance to collect loads of bonus prizes. Once again, watch out for those mines (cunningly hidden behind the parcels!).

"I really do enjoy playing it, but I believe it could have been better. Much better"





SMASH TV

consuming national pastime – *Smash TV*. Similar in many ways to the game show featured in *The Running Man* movie, one or two warriors (simultaneously, of course) plough their way, arena by arena, through a TV studio bursting with wads of cash, bonus prizes, and several thousand human, robot and bio-mechanoid nasties. As you can probably guess, the idea is to clear each arena of the requisite number of nasties, collecting as many goodies as possible along the way. This presents players with one or two problems. One – the sheer number of bad guys, who all either home in, explode at, or shoot at our hero(es). Two – in order to have any chance against this army of death each player has independent firing and movement controls. To achieve this the arcade machine uses one joystick for movement and one joystick to angle the player's weapon (just like Williams' ancient *Robotron* coin-op – the game which *Smash TV* is essentially an update of). This being the '90s there're also four End-Of-Level Guardians in there. First up is Mutoid Man – half man-half machine, all evil (as they say). Scarface and The Cobra Twins are the next two, with the TV show's presenter himself to battle it out with in the final arena.

And so we come to Ocean's miniaturised Amiga version – and I really *do* mean miniaturised. Before I go on though, I ought to stress one very important point – I do really enjoy this game. It's good fun, and the two player mode is great. Having said that though...

AIMING FOR THOSE DIZZY HEIGHTS

The first noticeable thing about Amiga *Smash TV* is that the playing area is soooo much smaller than in the arcade original. And as you'd expect, this leads to all kinds of problems. For a start, the whole relationship between the warriors, the play area and the bad guys has been altered to compensate for the smaller screen size. Movement patterns aren't quite the same, and collision detection is far more uncertain than in its arcade parent. There's a lack of fluidity in the control, too – strange when even the C64 version →

machine. There're just so many little details to try and cram in. It was a nightmare, but at the same time it was fun to do. As far as I know just about every touch was implemented.

There seem to be some fundamental differences between your version and the arcade machine, though. The screen size is different for a start.

Well, not only would it have meant a complete re-write for the American screen display to try for full screen, but it would have been impossible on a standard Amiga. There just isn't enough memory or CPU time to play with. You've got to remember that it uses 32 colours, which instantly adds to screen processing time. And there's a hell of a lot happening at once – sprites whizzing around all over the place. If I was writing for an Amiga 3000, then yeah, I could have done a full conversion. But it just wasn't possible within the limitations.

There seem to have been quite a few extra changes though.

Well, the movement patterns aren't identical for a start. And the graphics, or rather their relationship to each other, aren't the same as the arcade machine's. It's simply down to lack of memory and processor time, and the reduced screen size. It's not arcade perfect. It couldn't be. Changes were also made during playtesting. In the end it wasn't so much a case of how close to the arcade machine it could be, but how playable we could make it.

So lack of power meant a smaller screen format, which forced further changes to the game.

Yeah. You've got to remember that even the aspect ratio of the display is different. The arcade machine has a pretty square display, whereas the Amiga version has to work to a grid of 40 x 25 cells.

But what about changes to, say, the End Of Level Guardian screens? Mutoid Man for example – the way that the blue balls appear all the time, rather than just when a warrior moves in front of him.

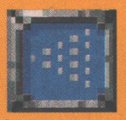
Again, it was changed to suit the Amiga version rather the stay true to the arcade one. That screen does play differently – there are safe areas in my version which aren't in the original, for instance. But as time passes, they become progressively more dangerous. Elements were changed to suit playability. That it is fun in its own right was the main concern. →

ARMAGEDDON DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

It's power-up city in *Smash TV*. If reality is giving you problems, why not just nuke it?

Smart bomb – kerpow!

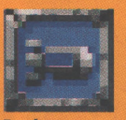
Extra speed boost


Scatter bullets

The longer lasting shield

Mortar bombs

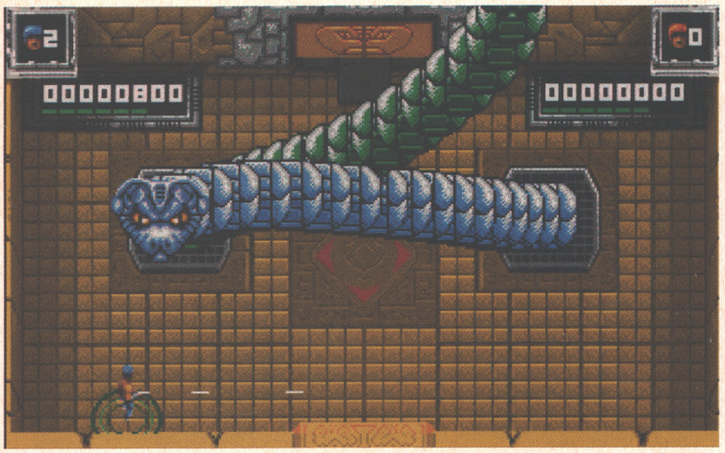
Spinning death


Rocket launcher

Spinning laser orb

An extra life – collect it!

Long range arc bombs



The Cobra Twins aren't the most polite of chaps when it comes to looking after guests. It gets worse though – avoid these babies and there're still the floating mines to deal with!

has managed to capture this element of slickness – an essential part of any Williams arcade game. And then there're the End Of Level Guardians. While in the arcade original lives were only lost through bad judgement or stupidity, this version alters the difficulty level drastically and those lives just go tumbling away. In the arcade game the majority of lives are lost in the main arena screens. In this version getting through the first set of arenas to Mutoid Man is relatively easy, but getting past him is nigh on impossible. This doesn't seem fair at all.

"Good fun, and the two player mode is great"

There are other, less important but nonetheless niggling, irritations with Amiga *Smash TV* – the way the speech samples are used in the wrong situations and the general inaccuracy of sound fx and mix, the lack of scrolling between arenas (Amiga owners have to make do with the screen blanking, save for a *Smash TV* logo) and so on. Whatever the reasons for it, the word 'cheap' springs to mind. The control system is less than ideal, too. For those unlucky enough not to own two joysticks (or four and an adaptor in two player mode) then a fire-in-the-direction-of-movement system is used. This simply doesn't work. It means that in order to shoot at something the warrior must run straight at it. There are two keys on the keyboard to lock the firing, or reverse it, but in practice these are just unusable – the game is far too frantic. The system used in Jeff Minter's *Llamatron* – where the gun fires automatically, and all pressing fire does is lock it into the direction you're currently moving, a direction it continues to point in even when you scoot off at a different angle – would have been a much better bet.

There's been a lot of arguing at AMIGA POWER about this one. Half the office thinks that the game concept is simply too slight to stand up as a full price product in the first place. Then there's Stuart who, like me, loves the arcade machine, but believes this to be a very poor conversion, losing all the magic of the original. And then, there's me. I'm disappointed, sure, but I still like it – if only there hadn't been so many compromises made in the conversion.

The reason I'm being so negative is that I believe it could have been better. Much better. Maybe because I'm such an avid fan of the arcade machine I'm being too picky, and expect too much from the humble Amiga, I don't know – all I do know is that if it *had* been a true copy of the arcade machine I'd be tempted to give it the highest rating in AMIGA POWER ever. But it isn't, it's just a groovy little blaster. Buy it, but don't put it at the top of your list.

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

Hey, where did all those blue lizard guys come from? (Time for a sharp exit!)

UPPERS At last – an Amiga version of my favourite arcade machine! It's just about all in there, and they've even included two player and two joystick modes. A lifetime of gross-out ultraviolence awaits.

DOWNERS It just doesn't meet my admittedly high standards. I wanted an exact, pixel-perfect treatment of the original. What they've done instead is produce a cut-down (particularly in screen size) *interpretation* of the coin-op.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A disappointment, but still a damn good game. Maybe I was expecting too much, I don't know. I've got my problems with it, sure – the changes to the Mutoid Man screen are particularly bad – but despite my complaints, it still manages to be one of the most enjoyable blasts I've seen all year. Good sicko stuff.

81 PERCENT

TOTAL CARNAGE – HE STILL LOVES IT!

And was it a conscious decision to let the warriors leave the screen before the baddies have all been wiped out?

Yes, it simply saves time. Otherwise you'd be hanging around forever blasting Mr Shrapnels and things.

And the collision detection? It's sometimes possible to run straight through a gang of thugs.

In the arcade machine it's actually possible to run through some of the bad guys also, though a good run up is necessary. But yes, the collision detect is deliberately more lenient, to make up for screen size. When you consider the number of enemies on a single screen, it would have been impossible otherwise. It takes a good player about an hour to work through the arcade machine, and it takes about the same amount of time with my version. So I think the difficulty level is pitched about right.

So what's your next project?

It's the Mega Drive version of *Smash TV*. The Mega Drive is totally and utterly unsuitable to the game. I didn't actually know that I'd have to do it when I took the job on, so goodness knows how it will turn out.

After spending so long with the game, you must be quite fed up with it by now.

No. I still really enjoy the game. They've only just taken the arcade machine back off me. I wasn't too fussed to see the back of it, but I still enjoy playing it. It's just the most mindless machine ever. Everybody I know loved the arcade machine. It's just so unbelievably violent. Brilliant.

Do you intend to continue handling conversions, or does the idea of an original game appeal?

I'd like to do a game by somebody who knows nothing about computers. Games programmers are almost always crap designers. They rarely know how to actually design a good computer game.

So just how much of a computer freak are you?

The last thing I want to do when I'm relaxing is to play video games. I like them, but I'd much rather spend time with human beings. A lot of programmers are geeks who spend all their time with their machine. Human beings are infinitely more interesting. I can't love a machine – it's an inanimate object, y'know?

Screen shots from Amiga version.

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LET US PREY

It's a much-touted fact that *Birds Of Prey* features not one, not two (etc), but forty different planes to fly. But what do they all look like? Well, it's funny you should ask...

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £34.99
Programmers: Argonaut
Release: Out now

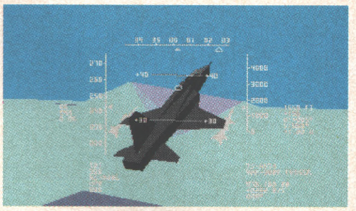
The sheer quantity of flight sims I've reviewed in the last few months makes be wonder whether no one else in the AMIGA POWER office actually likes them. Not at all, I'm assured, they love them. It's simply because they're such a warmhearted, thoughtful bunch, and reckoned I might like a change from doing wargames. That's fine by me – I'm never happier than when exploring the heavens with a joystick between my knees – but I've got this nagging feeling that I'm slowly being labelled a flight sim buff, the sort of person who spends rainy Sunday afternoons standing on the roofs of airport terminals taking down aeroplane registration numbers. It's not true! I just sort of like flight sims. A bit. Anyway...

Argonaut, the people behind *Birds Of Prey*, are no strangers to huge, 3D epics. In fact they've built their reputation on them. But this is their first flight sim, and they've been working on it for absolutely ages. So how does it differ from the other 3,166 flight sims I've looked at this month alone? And is it any good?

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS OF FLIGHT

Birds of Prey's main distinguishing feature is the number of different planes it simulates. It's really rather a large number, the sort of number that's hard to visualise in terms of tangible objects, like pineapples. You can probably visualise five pineapples okay, and just about get your mind around ten. Or perhaps fifteen. But try to imagine 40 pineapples laid out on the table in front of you. It just can't be done, can it? But that's the unfeasibly large number of distinct types of aircraft *Birds Of Prey* lets you choose your 'mount' from. There are 27 Western aircraft and 13 Soviet ones, and they range from nippy fighter planes to hulking transport aircraft, with all sorts of weird and extremely wonderful types in between. You'll have hours of fun just reading their technical specifications. (Or possibly not).

And the other one (distinguishing feature, that is) is detail. Argonaut have thrown caution to the wind and abandoned rapid screen updates (more on that later) in favour of packing as much detail as they can into the graphics. I won't present you with a list right away, but it's worth bearing in mind that undercarriage doesn't just disappear when you press 'U', it actually retracts, with a suitable whirring sound. And after you've loaded up your plane with



You're not restricted to boring old grass and trees. Here's some arctic scenery...

The Argonaut team finally get their collection of 40 (very detailed indeed) planes

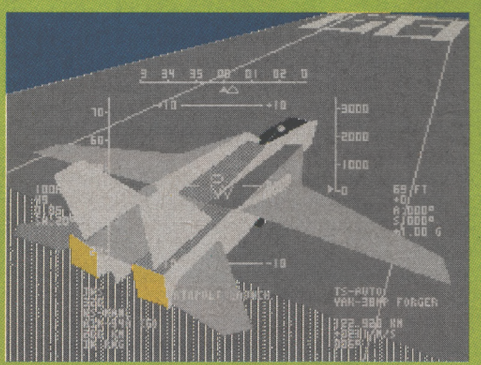
BIRDS O

BIRDS OF PREY – THE TOP FIVE MISSIONS

The choice of missions is big and deep and wide and tall in *Birds Of Prey*, so any pilot worth his salt (or, indeed, not worth his salt) will soon feel perfectly at home shooting the hell out of things.

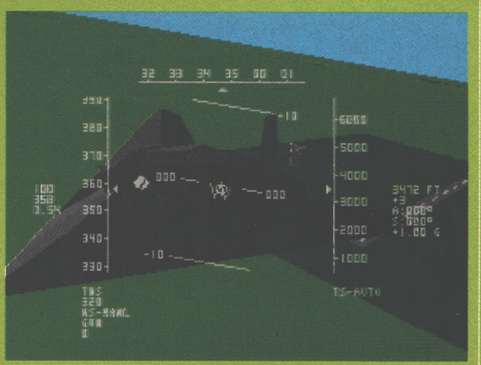
From the 12 types of mission available to pilots in *Birds of Prey* (and the myriad variations beyond that on each type), I've picked my five favourite favourites. It was tricky though – there are an *awful* lot to chose from...

Mission selection screen one – clicking the mouse on the picture brings up a description of the mission type.



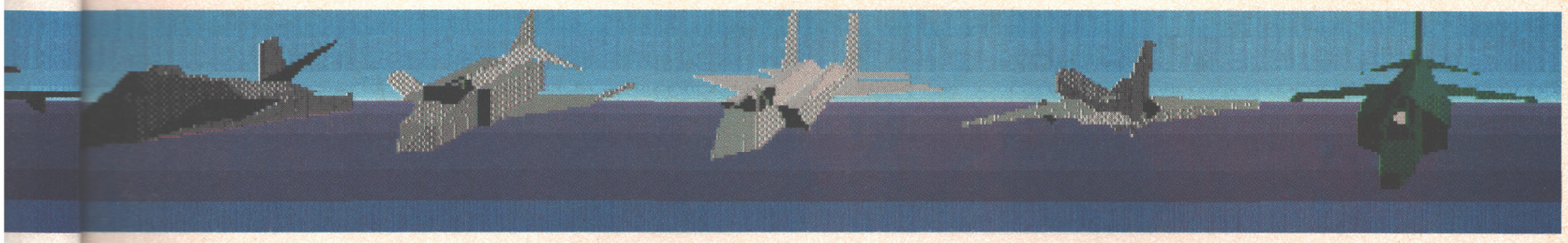
AIR SUPERIORITY

Everyone's fave – shooting down enemy fighters – but which plane will you choose to do the job in? I tend to go for the F-14, not just because I fancy myself a bit of a Tom Cruise, but also because it carries the corking Phoenix missile, which can destroy a target a mindboggling 124 miles away (without you even having to be able to see it). It also makes for some impressive carrier launch sequences, although the subsequent landings are nowhere near as easy as Tom makes them look.



STEALTH BOMBING

The plane everyone's talking about at the moment is the Lockheed F-117 Stealth Fighter (although it's really more of a bomber). Here's where you can put it through its paces, sneaking up on the unsuspecting enemy and dropping your payload on their heads before they've had a chance to do anything about it. Should the F-117 prove too lightweight, the B-2 Stealth Bomber is a bit more hefty, but no less stealthy. It's a bit wobbly to fly, though, being very flat and wide.



missiles and bombs you can actually see them hanging off the wings. And cockpits have pilots sitting in them. Hangar doors open and close. Radar dishes rotate. Runway lights come on at night. And stars come out too. It's beautiful, it really is. (But more on that later as well).

FEELING THE NEED FOR SPEED

Birds of Prey's layout is pretty similar to any other flight sim's. Having set up a pilot, and decided which side he's on, you then go through a series of screens choosing a mission to fly, a base to fly it from, a plane to fly it in and an array of weaponry to accomplish it with. These sections are all strictly functional, and, apart from some attractive pics on the 'missions selection' screen, are unadorned with the pretty animated graphics normally associated with this sort of thing. The overall effect is reminiscent of *Carrier Command* – just the bare essentials, really. In many ways this is quite disappointing, but it does lead to the advantage, however, that you don't have to sit through hours of disk accessing every time you crash and want to start a new mission. (In fact – and here's another remarkable *Birds of Prey* statistic – the whole blooming game loads off just the one disk. There's absolutely no disk swapping to be done at all!)

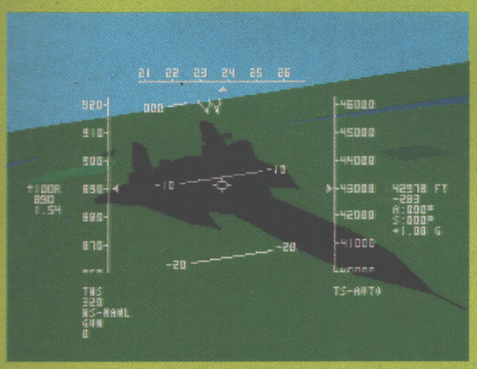
"I'm not going to condemn it just because it's got jerky graphics"

The *Carrier Command* feel extends into the rest of the game, too. Although the hardware you'll be using is clearly either Western or Soviet, the war you'll be using it in is a more abstract affair, fought in an imaginary world between Side A and Side B. This takes a bit of getting used to, I have to admit. But if you can manage to suspend your disbelief, playing the game is actually jolly good fun. The missions are as involving as any I've flown before, and far more varied than most (just take a look at some of the screen shots) – indeed, the only area really missing is dogfighting. Technically you ought to be able to go chasing after MiGs, following them through all your favourite textbook dogfighting manoeuvres before downing them with a burst of cannon fire, but in practice I found that most kills tend to be made (as would happen in real life with many of these planes, most probably) at long range with missiles, and you never really get up close at all.

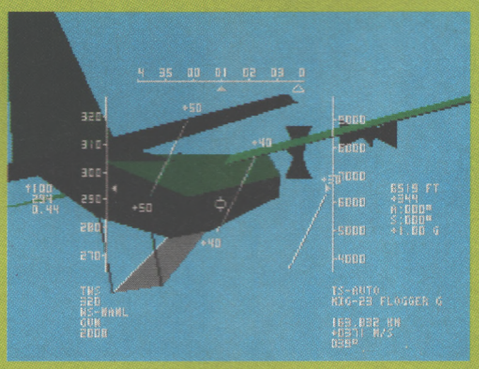
Then of course, there are the graphics, which are nothing short of superb. Each type of aircraft is reproduced in intricate detail, right down to things like proper cockpits (with pilots in) and round wheels. Control towers have windows (which I'm sure have people behind →

off the ground with the most-delayed piece of software in history (probably).

F PREY

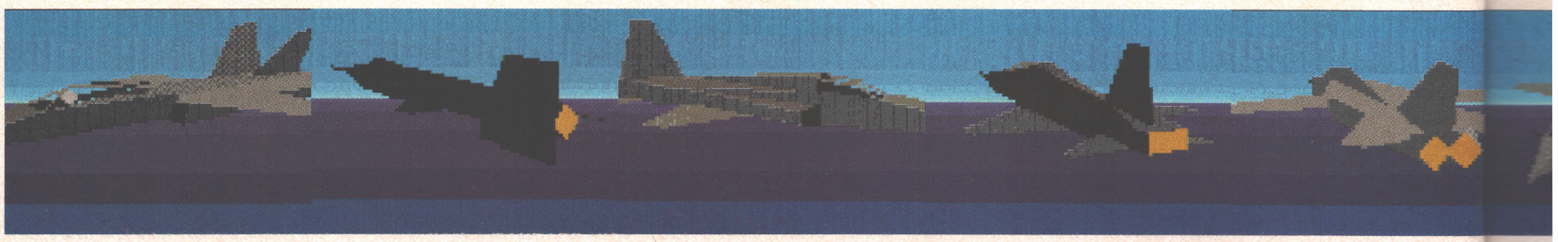


RECONNAISSANCE
Not the most inspiring of choices, you might think, but I've included this one because it gives you the chance to go for a spin in an SR-71 Blackbird, possibly the wickedest plane ever built. (It's just so... black). Flying at three times the speed of sound, and ridiculously high, you've got to hope you can outrun the enemy for long enough to take a few snapshots of their most secret installations. Other contenders for the job include the flimsy TR-1 and the crap Bear, neither of which are half as much fun.



SUPPLY DROP
Again, it doesn't sound terribly exciting, but you get to see the brilliant effect of your Hercules/Antanov's cargo bay opening – from inside the plane! Marvellous stuff. Having done that you've got to fly unfeasibly low over the drop area so that your payload can be delivered safely, remembering to close the door again before heading for home. Your plane is a bit on the vulnerable side though (to say the least) so it's best to take a couple of friendly wingmen along to back you up.

TEST PILOTING
If you haven't been impressed so far, wait 'til you've had a crack at this. The X-15 is the world's fastest, highest flying aircraft, and here's where you can have a go at test flying it. First, though, you've got to fly its B-52 'mothership' (that's what you can see in this pic) to a suitable altitude before pressing the left Shift key to launch the X-15 and kick in its rocket engine. If you take it high enough into the atmosphere you eventually reach the darkness of outer space, and can see lots of stars. Brilliant.



them if you look close enough, though I couldn't swear to it), and there are even trees dotted about the place with green leaves and brown trunks. Mind you, you have to be flying pretty (and dangerously!) low to see all this – most of the time it tends to go unnoticed, and *BOP* looks just like any other flight sim.

WATCHING A ZOOM WITH A VIEW

The other major graphical innovation lies in the way objects are coloured. I'm not too hot on all these technical terms, but *BOP* uses a technique which I believe is called 'light source shading'. What this means, in effect, is that surfaces are dark if they're turned away from the sun, and light if they're facing towards it. You don't really tend to notice this unless you're looking out for it, it has to be said, but it seems to give the graphics a subtly 'realistic' edge.

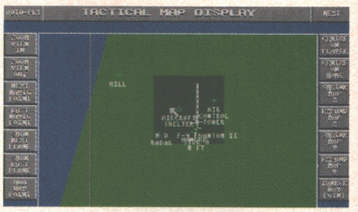
There are all the usual viewing angles as well, which can be zoomed in and out of and panned about, along with rather a nice line in views of all the other planes in your area, including enemy ones. Picking up a blip on your radar and then cutting to a close-up of a MiG screaming in for the kill really does bring home the message that you're just about to die.

"The overall effect is reminiscent of *Carrier Command*"

Sound is another thing that's worth a paragraph of its own. From the moment you start up your engines and kick in the reheat you know you're onto something – ie the sound effects are really good. As well as the splendid engine noise, which varies depending on whether you're flying a jet or propeller plane, there are numerous subsidiary effects. (I can feel another list coming on). For starters there's the wonderful, gut-wrenching sound of a missile being unleashed. This contrasts with the gentle 'gliding' noise your plane makes if you run out of petrol in mid-air. And don't think sound is just limited to your own plane. Fly past another aircraft and you can hear its engines too, and the same goes for tanks. This may not be terribly true-to-life, but what the heck, eh? Other effects are stranger still: don't quote me on this, but I'm sure I can hear seagulls flying round my airbase. Finally, while machine guns sound decidedly limp, the resulting explosions more than make up for them (although the visual accompaniment is a bit weedy, it has to be said). But enough about sound – back to the graphics.

Ah yes, the graphics. Um, there's a bit of a problem.

There's only one snag with all this extravagance, and you've probably guessed it already. Remember I mentioned screen updates? Well, there

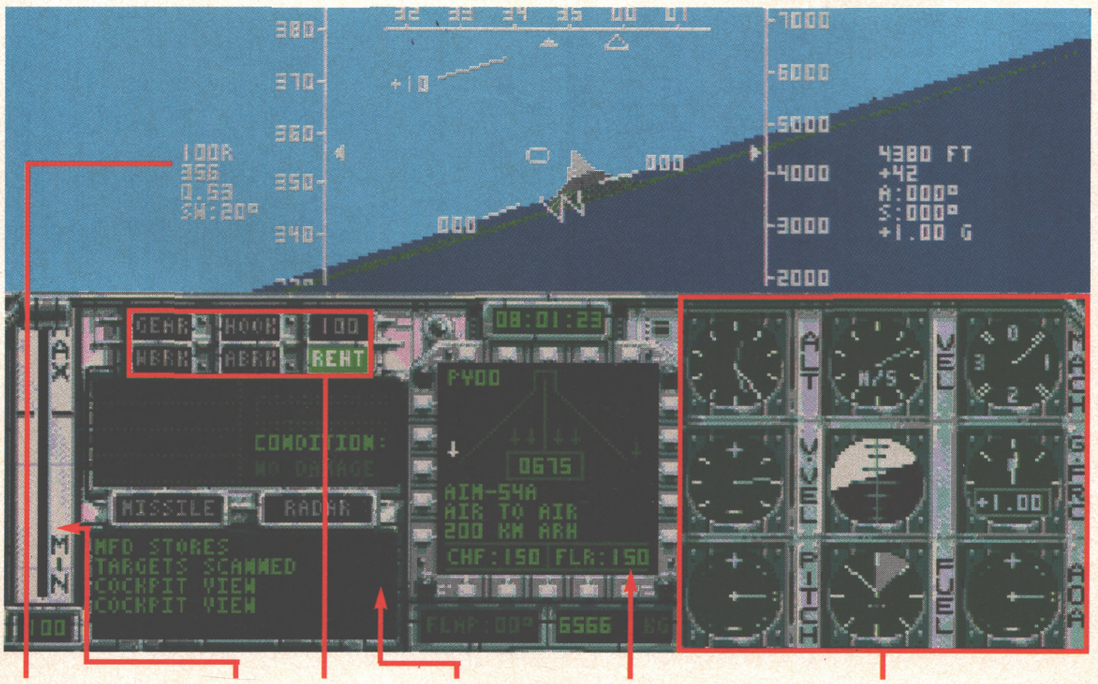


***Birds of Prey*'s map can be called up at any point in the game, and operates much like the one in *Carrier Command*. You can scroll it about, zoom in and out and mark on waypoints which can be jumped to directly using the autopilot.**

40 DIFFERENT PLANES – BUT THEY ALL LOOK JUST THE SAME INSIDE

The one thing flight sims all have in common is an incredibly complicated instrument panel...

And *Birds of Prey* is no exception, so here's the obligatory diagram – it's the same for all the planes. Bear in mind, though, that most of the information it gives you is also available on the head-up display, so you can dispose of the instruments altogether if you want, giving you a much better field of vision. (It doesn't make the planes move any faster though...)



Head-Up Display – essential info appears here, saving you from rooting around in the instrument panel. It has various modes, such as bomb aiming and navigation.

Throttle – you know what this does, don't you?

Warning Lights – keep you informed of any missiles that may be tracking you.

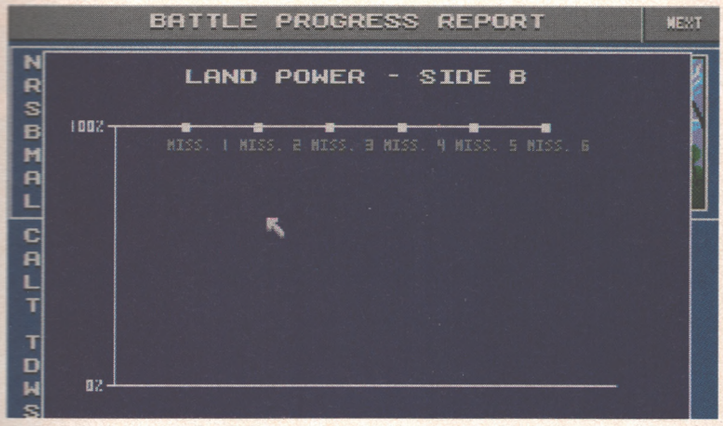
Confirmation Display – messages appear here when you select certain functions, just to let you know (erm) that you have.

Damage Display – Multi-Function Display – if you can find the right key, this can be switched to display radar, navigational information, weapons status or a map of the area you're flying over.

Dials and Things – here's where you find all sorts of miscellaneous performance figures, artificial horizons, speeds, heights, angles and other terrifying facts and figures.

ONE IN THE EYE FOR THE COMPETITION...

MicroProse: *BOP* has the F-15E covered, as well as the F-19 (well, the F-117), making both *F-15 II* and *F-19* somewhat redundant.
Spectrum Holobyte: The F-16's in there too, so you can throw away your copy of *Falcon*.
Domark: And your copy of *MiG-29*. The top Soviet fighter plane is fully represented.
Ocean: *F-29 Retaliator*? Bye bye. You need look no further than *BOP* for the Grumman X-29 (its real name).
Dynamix: *A-10* [or whatever it's called] looks a little sick in the face of *BOP*'s perfectly good rendering.
Electronic Arts: Oops. EA's own *Interceptor* ducks out too, as the F-18 is right here as well.



While you're busy flying around having fun, a battle is raging on the ground, the outcome of which is affected by your actions. You can have a butcher's at the progress report between missions to let you know how things are going...

aren't very many. Maybe one or two per second when things get really hectic, and about four at the most on an internal view with the detail level set right down at minimum. This means that things are noticeably jerky, quite seriously so in fact, and that's a problem which has consigned many previous flight sims to otherwise undeserved oblivion.

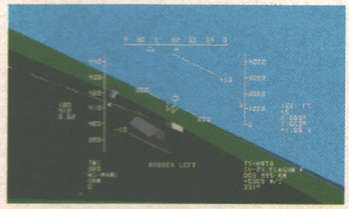
POISED FOR A RUNWAY SUCCESS

Argonaut are trying to claim that frame rate is some sort of pointless macho thing, and detail is a lot more important, but I'm afraid I really can't agree. The controls are sluggish enough as it is (joystick or keyboard control is a complete no-no, and even the mouse tends to be a bit erratic), so the last thing you need in the heat of the battle is to have to wait for up to half a second to gauge the response to your actions, only to find you've gone a bit too far in one direction, then correcting only to find (another eon later) that you've overcompensated, and your plane is wobbling hopelessly all over the sky. True, you do gradually get used to it, and after a day or so you can almost believe you've learned to live with the problem. But you've only got to load up *Falcon*, *Interceptor* or *Thunderhawk* to snap you out of it, and make you realise just how much of a difference slick graphics make.

But I'm not going to condemn *Birds Of Prey* just because it's got jerky graphics. It's simply got too much else going for it. For a start, it's brilliant fun to play – your first couple of weeks of ownership will probably be spent simply trying out all the different sorts of plane, while flying missions will keep you going for goodness knows how long. And even when you think you know the manual off by heart (and considering the size of the bleeding thing, that little task should keep you occupied for a year or two), you'll still keep discovering new pull-down menus and options, and, well, all sorts really. (It's that complicated).

So there we are, then. Although they haven't quite pulled it off (unless you're lucky enough to own an Amiga 3000 or something), *Birds of Prey* is a truly marvellous game – a real progression for the flight simulation genre – and I can firmly recommend it to anyone who likes this sort of thing.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*



Your base consists of a runway, a control tower, an aircraft shelter and a radar station. If any of these get damaged by baddies the base's capabilities will be limited until it gets repaired again.

UPPERS Phenomenally comprehensive, with a wider choice of aircraft than every other flight sim ever put together. Loads of variety mission-wise. Splendidly detailed and realistic graphics, with the sound to match.

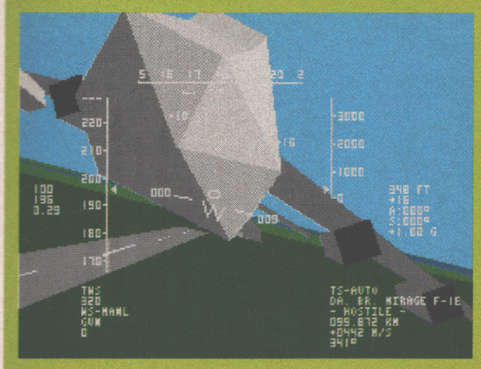
DOWNERS Unfortunately the screen update is painfully, excruciatingly jerky, and there's not a lot you can do about it (except grit your teeth and try to pretend it doesn't matter). And the controls are as unconvincing as ever.

THE BOTTOM LINE

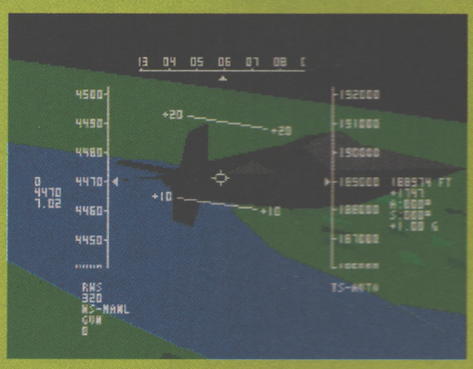
Certainly the most complex flight sim to date, and quite possibly the most enjoyable to play – it's virtually guaranteed to hold your attention for months. But, at the risk of labouring the point, those darn jerky graphics will ruin it for many.

81 PERCENT

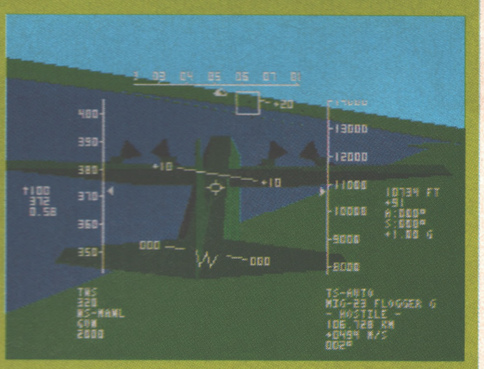
TOP THREE 'LEAST SUITABLE PLANES FOR THE JOB'



Stealth Bombing in the Antonov AN-124 Ruslan: As the world's largest aircraft, and a troop-transporter par excellence, the Antonov is completely unsuitable as a stealth bomber. Its large radar signature and slow speed make it a cinch for the enemy to locate, and its complete lack of weaponry leads to problems when it comes to attacking the target. (In the unlikely event that you get anything like that far).



Supply Dropping in the North American X-15A: More of a rocket with wings than an aeroplane, the X-15 can fly at nearly seven times the speed of sound, and climb to the limits of the Earth's atmosphere. Unfortunately its poor low-speed handling and limited take-off weight make it entirely inappropriate for supply drops, what supplies it can carry tending to get dashed against the ground with such force as to render them completely useless.



Air Interception in the Lockheed C-139H-30 Hercules: While excelling in its intended role as a transport aircraft and sometime gun platform, the ungainly Hercules just doesn't cut it as a dog-fighter, the main problem being its lack of speed, agility and air-to-air missiles. Your best bet is to go in low and slow, keeping your head down, only opening the rear cargo door at the last minute to let rip with everything you've got.

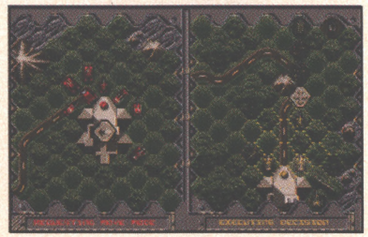
BATTLE ISLE

Game: Battle Isle
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Price: £29.99
Authors: Lothar Schmitt and Thomas Hertler of Blue Byte
Release: Out now

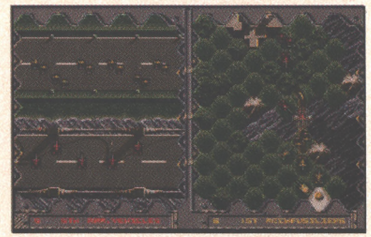
At last – a wargame for the common man! But what's the biggest surprise – that it looks set to put a hex on average games players, or that it's come from Ubi Soft..?

When one of the teams captures a building, you see them slicing through the door with oxy-acetylene torches, then kicking it down and standing there looking butch for a while. Nice (if you like that sort of thing).

Your base contains a few back-up units in addition to the ones on the board when you start. You can select any of them at any time and sneak them out of the back door and into the action. Gotcha!



Each unit in an army has different movement capabilities, depending on range, terrain, strength etc. The hexes a unit can move to on any one turn are highlighted in the appropriate colour.



When units meet in combat, the screen switches to display them facing up to each other and exchanging fire. Note the background under each side, which shows the terrain each unit currently occupies.

A favourite catchphrase in the AMIGA POWER office is "Yikes! A wargame! Call Jonathan Davies!" (how we laugh), but in the interests of horizon-broadening and open-mindedness and that kind of thing, I snatched *Battle Isle* out of Matt's hands when it appeared and demanded to review it. It wasn't a totally magnanimous gesture designed to save poor old JD from another weekend spent reading instruction manuals, though. The word was out that *Battle Isle* was a wargame for people who didn't like wargames, an action-packed arcade-paced slaughterfest that just happened to have enough tactical and strategic depth to float a battleship on – in fact, it sounded like the first Amiga game since *Laser Squad* to capture the awesome flavour of that all-time-8-bit-favourite-that-we're-incessantly-plugging-although-nobody-else-in-the-entire-world-knows-what-we're-rattling-on-about, *Rebelstar*.

Certainly the concept is a loosely similar one – two armies (one player against the computer or two humans competing) challenge each other on one of a series of 16 islands constructed of hexes, each littered with bases, factories, rivers, mountains and so on. The action is displayed on a vertically-split screen, with each player using one side, and the objective is simply to defeat the enemy by either wiping out all of his forces or destroying his command base.

Victory is achieved by the use of various vehicles from all three traditional branches of the armed forces – air force, army and navy. (You start off with simple tank battles on small islands with no buildings apart from the bases, but as you progress through the levels more and more elements are added until at the end it's a full-scale war). These all have various purposes and capabilities, but they share one common link – whenever they encounter an enemy division, the two units exchange fire in a brief computer-controlled bout of fighting, the outcome of which is displayed in one of the two halves of the split screen.

This will nearly always result in the loss of a few vehicles from each side (a unit is made up of six of the same kind of weapon), but to make sure that the numbers are in your favour, you'll have to plan engagements carefully. The hex layout of the map makes it possible for you to attack enemies with multiple units at once, but beware – it also means that your opponent can do exactly the same to you...

NOT QUIET ON THE DISK FRONT

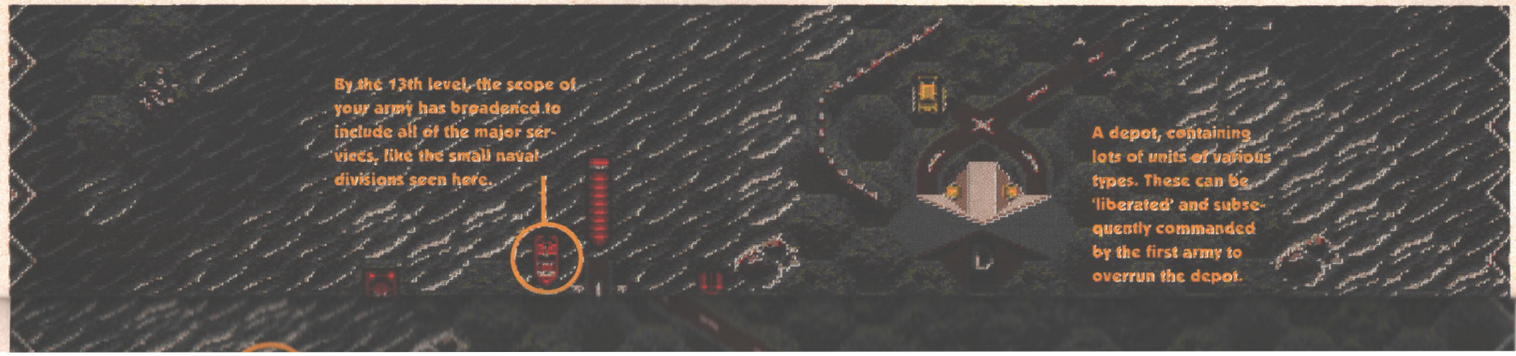
So far so good, but sad to report, *Battle Isle* doesn't quite pull it off. For a game where the emphasis has been put on accessibility and fast pace, it's just too slow to work. Moving uses a dual turns system, whereby in each phase one player moves his units and the other one 'aims' (ie decides which of his units are going to take part in that battle) and in the other phase (separated from the first by a round of battles) the positions are reversed. As you might expect, moving takes a lot longer than 'aiming', with the result that in a one-player game you find you have to spend a lot of time hanging around for the computer to finish its moves.

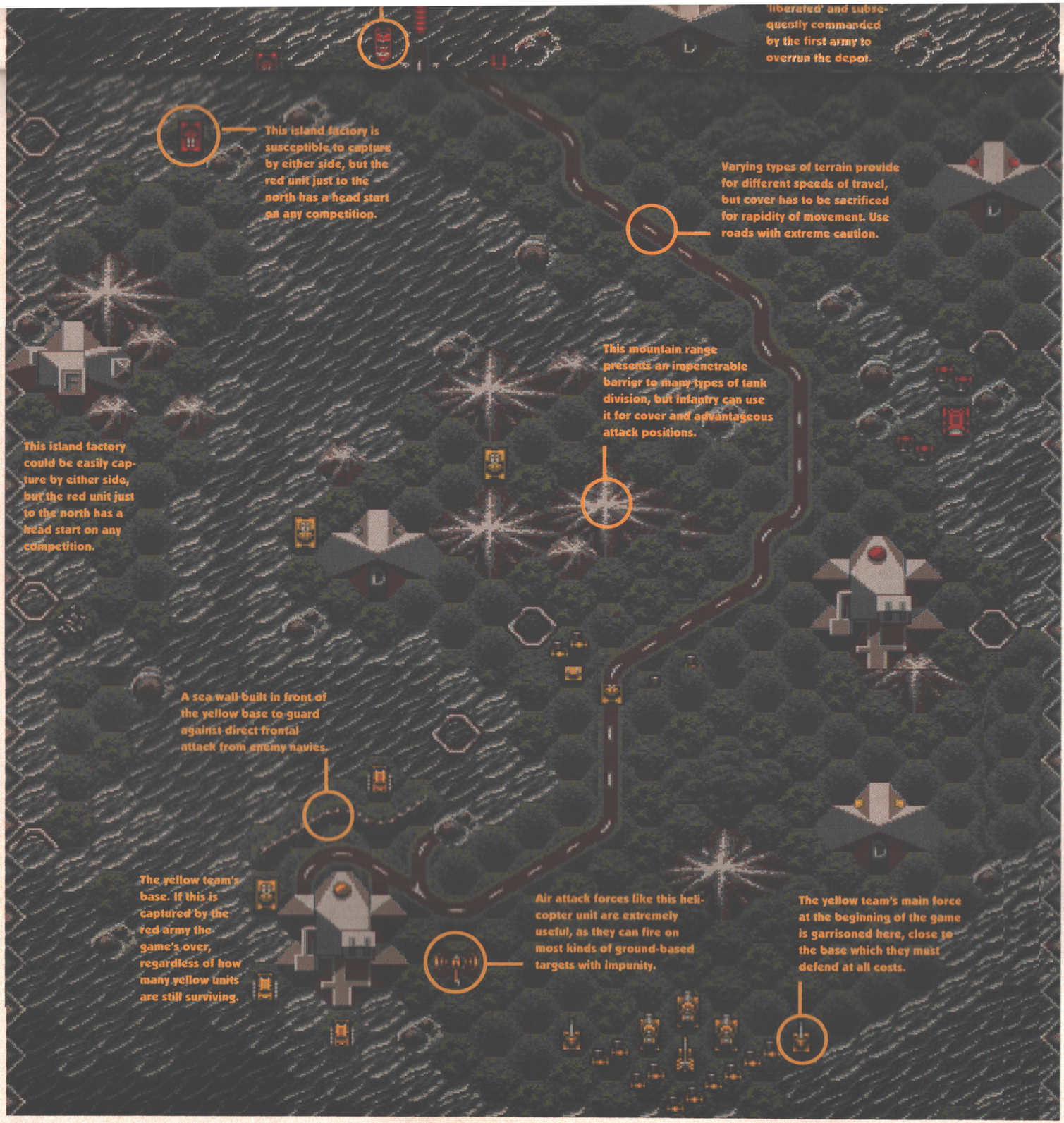
In one instance, playing on the eighth or ninth level, I found myself twiddling my thumbs for over seven minutes after I'd finished my aiming phase, and only a Canadian Giant Redwood calls that fast-moving action. Also, for some inexplicable reason, the computer accesses the main game disk at some length after each phase. Since the maps never get very big, and the graphics for the animated battle sequences can't possibly take up much memory, I can't for the life of me see why a machine with 512K of memory has to do this. The only conceivable explanation revolves around the music – the movement phase is accompanied, rather pointlessly, by a passable but quite unnecessary tune which, as it isn't present in the other phase, may be being loaded in and out of memory. If this is the case, it must represent one of the most confused judgements of priorities in the history of games programming – doing away with the disk accessing would double the speed of the game in the earlier levels.

ROLLING THE HARSH DICE OF FATE

The other major problem with *Battle Isle* is that for a strategy game it appears to rely heavily on elements of pure chance. After you've cleverly manoeuvred yourself into a situation where three of your strongest units are simultaneously attacking a single enemy division from advantageous terrain positions, it's really galling to watch as (seemingly as a sole function of dice-rolling luck) eleven of your eighteen tanks are wiped out for a loss of only one enemy.

The chances of exacting a similarly flukey revenge in your next turn are non-existent too, as each vehicle in a unit only gets one shot per attack. This means, for example, that if a two-tank unit gets involved with a full-strength six-tank enemy





flukey revenge in your next turn are non-existent too, as each vehicle in a unit only gets one shot per attack. This means, for example, that if a two-tank unit gets involved with a full-strength six-tank enemy division, it has to survive a minimum of three attacks unscathed to have any chance of coming out on top. (It's true that units become more skilled the more battles they take part in, but that's no good if they all get wiped out in their first one). This heavily advantageous weighting of numbers is a serious flaw in a game of chess-like tactics (how good a game would chess be if a roll of a die decided if a pawn defeated a Queen or not?), and watching your carefully-planned strategy disintegrate into a losing lottery entry is a sure way to see the game dispatched to the back of your software shelf at great speed. Hard games I can handle – unfair ones, no.

Unless you're a compulsive gambler, I can't see this one holding much appeal at the end of the day, which is a bit of a shame. There's a germ of a great game here, though – I hope someone has another go at it soon. We're still waiting for the Amiga's *Rebelstar*, but this is one of the better attempts at a wargame you don't have to be a long-term hospital patient to enjoy properly. Better luck next time, Ubi Soft.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

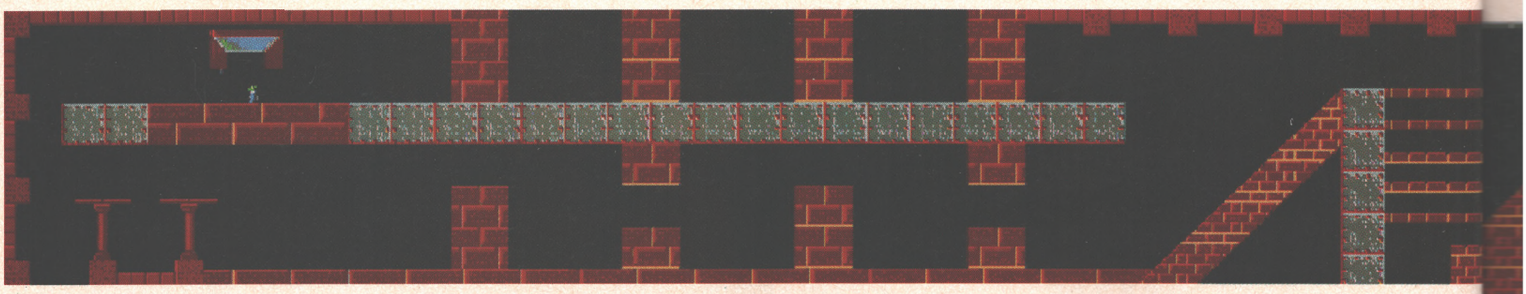
UPPERS Ridiculously easy to get to grips quickly with, with a brilliant joystick-based control system taking care of almost all necessary input. Looks lovely too, the intro sequence is funny and generally it's nearly there.

DOWNERS Unfathomable disk accessing on every single turn blows the fast-pace idea apart, as do the mammoth amounts of waiting around for the computer to take its turn on the later levels. Combat seems to be almost totally random, which spoils the whole tactical basis somewhat – this is a game more like *Risk* than chess, one where sheer weight of numbers is often the key to success.

THE BOTTOM LINE

An enormously promising and brave idea which hasn't quite come off. It's not quite as deep as it might have been or as others would have you believe, but the basic problem is that by the time you really get into it, it's all become so slow and repetitive and unfair that you just want to give up again.

78 PERCENT

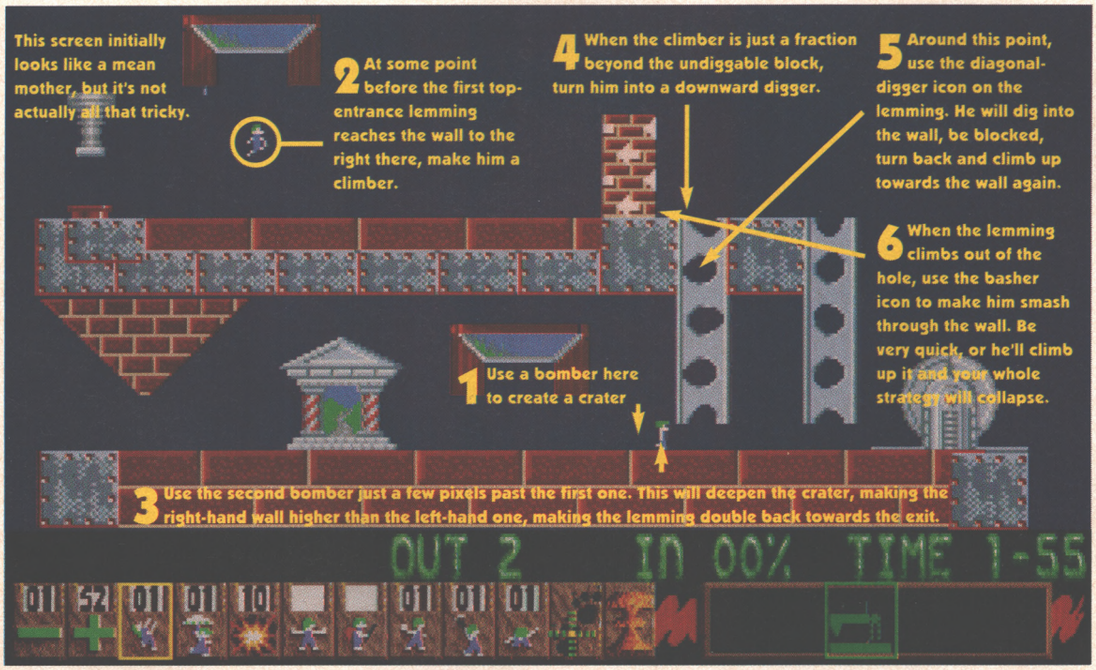


'Introducing SUPERLEMMING'. (Well, that's not actually what it says, but we'll forgive them the typo just this once). There's nothing overly tough about this level – just one lemming to save and apart from a single tricky bit at the end (point 'X', where if the lemming tries to build a bridge he hits his head on the roof and has to turn around and go back almost to the start) – it's pretty straightforward. Well, it would be. What we haven't mentioned is that this level doesn't

The world's first save-'em-up returns with yet *more* furry rodents, hell-bent on their own destruction. Oh – indeed – no!

OH NO! LEMMI

WICKED LEVEL, SCREEN ONE – LEMMING TOMATO KETCHUP FACILITY!



Game: Oh no! More Lemmings!
Publisher: Psygnosis
Author: Dave Jones
Price: £19.99 data disk version, £25.99 stand alone version
Release: Out now

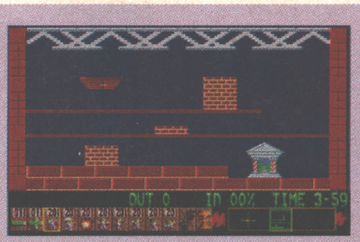
Okay, the four of you who know nothing about *Lemmings*, the biggest Amiga games phenomenon to date, check out the 'WILDLIFE CONSERVATION – A BEGINNER'S GUIDE' box right now and then come back. Everyone else, you've probably already got a cast-iron opinion of your own on whether you hate or (altogether more likely) love this monstrously popular and successful game, so you aren't likely to be too interested in the minor details of this 'sort-of' follow-up released by Psygnosis one year after the original, and just in time for the Christmas market surge. In that case, why have you bothered to read this far in the first place? Go on, clear off. Right, so who does that leave? (Silence). Oh, just me, is it? Fine.

Well, Stu, *Oh No! More Lemmings!* comes in two formats, as either a stand alone new game or as a data disk containing the same 100 levels but which

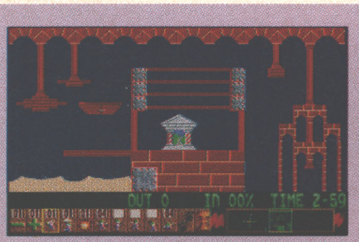
LEMMING ENTRIES (1-5)

To the left you'll find the first screen of each of the new game's five difficulty levels.

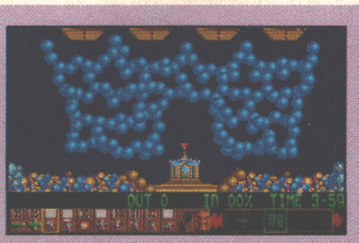
From near left (and in order of difficulty) we've got 'Tame', 'Crazy', 'Wild', 'Wicked' and 'Havoc' levels – the first screens are all pretty easy, but later on it gets nasty...



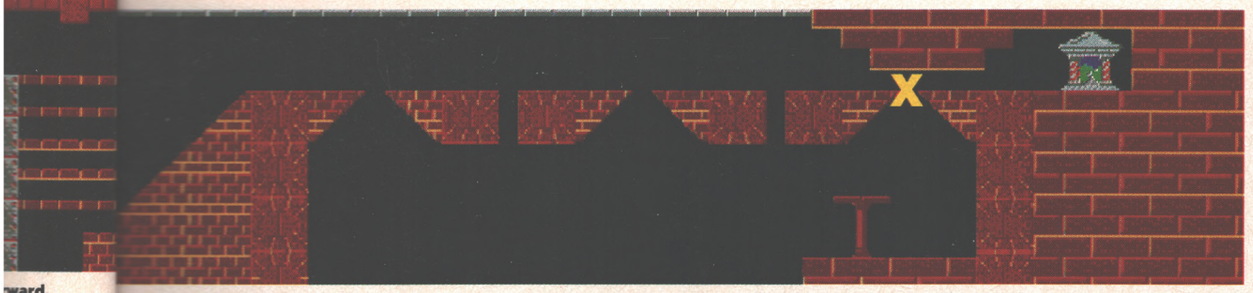
The very first screen – it's obviously a doddle, but try experimenting with all those new icons while you're about it...



...you might be glad you did later on! Not particularly on this screen though – it's fairly easy. Just climb, dig, stop, explode.



Maze-like in structure, experimentation will pay dividends here as you work out the most efficient way to save the critters.



feature just any old lemming, but – 'SUPERLEMMING'! In one of the few touches of innovation in *Oh No! More Lemmings!*, this new version of the little swines motors along at twice the usual rate, meaning that your reactions and co-ordination are going to have to be spot-on if you're not going to end up in bitter tears of frustration. Best of luck...

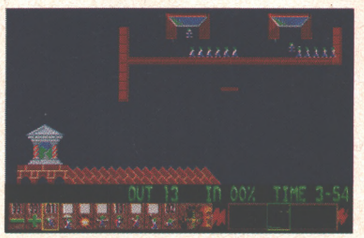
! MORE NGS!

requires a copy of the original game to run and costs £5 less. The game is exactly the same as before – same graphics, same icons etc – although the music is new, original stuff rather than the nursery rhymes of before. The only real change is that there are now five difficulty ratings (with 20 levels in each) instead of four. The same incredibly addictive gameplay that made *Lemmings* the No.2 game in our All-Time Top 100 is back and really, all that needs to be said in the way of analysis is that if you liked *Lemmings* you'll like this. All that's left to explain now is why I haven't given it the kind of mark you'd expect for the second-best Amiga game of all time.

"There hasn't been as much care taken this time around"

The hair-splitting starts here. Now it's all very well saying this is only a data disk and not a sequel, but I can't help feeling more could have been done to make it different from the first game. Maybe some really imaginative new graphic styles for the levels would have helped – Matt levelled much the same criticism at *Magic Pockets* a few months back, and would it really have been so tough to dream up a few different kinds of landscape for the little mammalian anti-heroes to wander through than the same old earth, fire, ice and water stuff you get here? Surely not.

Also, the difficulty curve is all wrong. Think about it – almost every Amiga owner in the country who was around this time last year must have a copy of this game by now, and the new ones will have got it in their Cartoon Classics pack. Making all of the first 20 levels embarrassingly easy, then, seems like a bit of a waste of memory. Anyone with the slightest grasp of the game's mechanics will sail through all of them at the first attempt – there's a dangerous possibility of boredom setting in before it gets interesting. After those, though, (and the first level at the second difficulty setting) comes a screen so unbelievably evil that it wouldn't be out of place on the very toughest level of the original game. Less of a difficulty curve than a difficulty cliff, this kind of thing shows that there just hasn't been as much care taken over this effort as was the first time around.

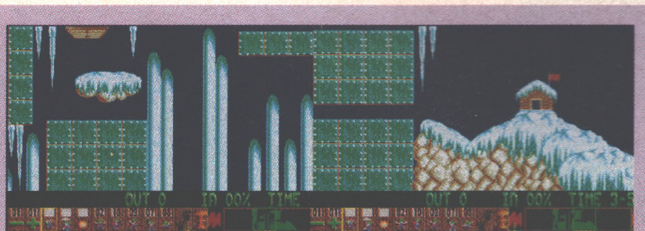


Your guide to poor pacing – suddenly, after 21 ludicrously easy screens, you find yourself on *this* virtual impossibility...

DMA have also passed up the chance to right a couple of the flaws present in the original, especially the one which makes it impossible to tell which way a particular lemming is going when there's a whole mass of them milling around and you need to perform a precision move. The over-riding impression (especially when you see the price) is that Psygnosis have – if not exactly rushed it out – certainly held a lot back (presumably many of these changes are being saved for a genuine *Lemmings 2*), and their real interest here is just to make a killing at Christmas. Sad, perhaps, but it's the way of the world.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

Don't bother reading this caption – there's a giant annotated version of this exact same screen up to the left there.



The first level at the hardest difficulty setting – strange looking, but you're getting little help here, we're going to leave you to puzzle it out for yourselves. (Er, okay then – we'll come clean. We can't actually do it either...)

WILDLIFE PRESERVATION – A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

If you're new to *Lemmings* (I can't imagine how you could be, for the reasons mentioned in the main review, but just for the sake of argument), you're probably wondering what all the fuss is about. Well, *here's* what.

Released a year ago, *Lemmings* was (and is) more or less the most original game concept ever seen on the Amiga. Lots of the furry little darlings drop from a trapdoor at the start of each level, and your task is to guide them all safely to the exit. You don't control their movements directly, though, but by the use of a number of icons displayed along the bottom of the screen. Each icon instructs a single lemming to perform a specific action, which normally results in some kind of change to the landscape of the level.

It's not that easy though – all the time you're doing this, the other lemmings are marching around independently, but being lemmings they're oblivious to danger and, if you don't stop them, they'll usually endeavour to get themselves killed by one of the many dangers littered around the screens.

Luckily, by a careful combination of the various effects brought about by the use of the icons, it's possible to alter the layout of each level in such a way that the lems will follow a safe path which will lead them to the exit. To successfully complete a level, you have to rescue a certain percentage of the lemmings in it, within a given time limit, and that's pretty much all there is to it. Of course, it's never quite as easy as it looks...

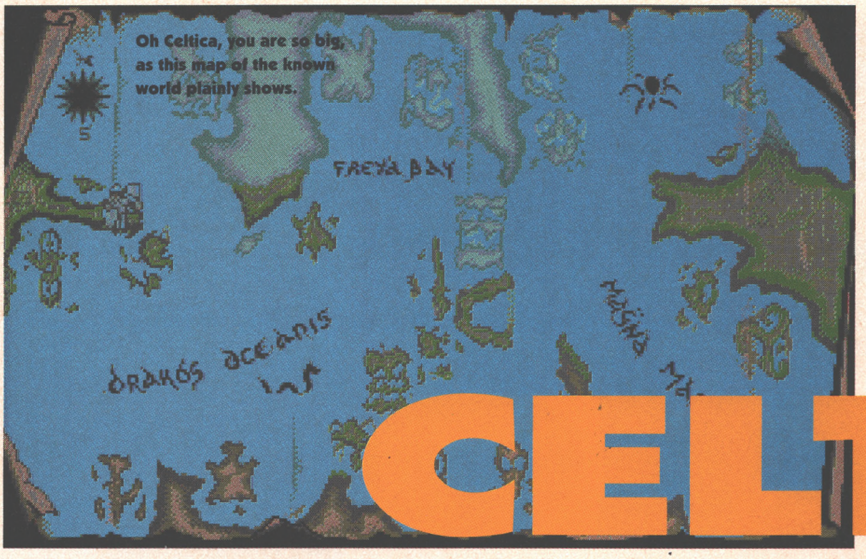
UPPERS The same classic game it always was, and I'd forgive a lot of sins just for those gorgeous speech samples.

DOWNERS Where's the imagination that gave *Lemmings* its character in the first place gone? The difficulty curve is crap, and the price is ridiculous for the data disk version.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Definitely a missed opportunity (I suspect DMA are keeping most of the good stuff under their hats for *Lemmings 2*), but still an excellent game. This lot should keep you going until *next* Christmas.

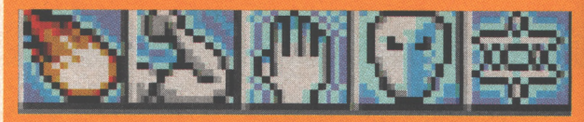
82 PERCENT



CELTIC L

SPELLING IT ALL OUT

Magic is the key to Legendary victory and, luckily, Celtica is just slopping over with the stuff. Magicians slurp their arcane powers from various sources, the



Game: Celtic Legends
Publisher: Ubi Soft
Price: £30.99
Author: Frederico Gaulbaire (code) and Pierre Fallard (graphics)
Release: December

Hot on the heels of *Heimdall*, the greased pig-toting Norse warrior sim from Core Design, comes another departure from the usual rote of role-playing games – Ubi Soft's *Celtic Legends*. Like *Heimdall*, and like the recent *Shadow Sorcerer* from SSI, *Legends* offers a sprite-ly overview of the action, but in spirit it's very different. In fact, with its hex-based movement on all levels (both map screens and closer-quarters character movement) and decidedly strategic-cum-tactical bent, it at first appears to be taking a diametrically opposed approach to Core's light-weight, puzzle-based offering. On closer inspection though, they do have a fair amount in common – both games, in their different ways, work because they remove much of the complicated, train-spottery stuff from role-playing, allowing the layman to get straight into the action.

As *Celtic Legends* has been programmed by a Frenchman, I anticipated something a little out of the ordinary, and I was right – there's oddness from the off. You're plonked into a scenario that has little to do with the Celts or their legends (a shame) – there's not a tree-worshipping Druid in sight, though at least the intro sequence comes with an 'interesting' bagpipe tune! What it offers instead is a swords and sorcery-style soiree featuring an assortment of monsters, a mythical land called Celtica and mucho fighting – AD&D fans will feel very much at home. (As will fans of 8-bit classic *Chaos* and the more disappointing Amiga follow-up *Lords Of Chaos*, but we'll get to that in a minute...)

The story is simple – there's an evil sorcerer (Sogrom the Scarlet to his mates, but Demog the supreme magician to you and I) on one side, and an equally powerful – but much nicer – wizard (you) on the other. As all-round good-egg Eskel the Blue you're charged with the familiar task of vanquishing anything that shows up positive on the obnoximeter – and as far as the land of Celtica is concerned this basically means pitting your forces against the hordes of Demog in a series of battles. These take place over a series of local islands, built up of a number of hexes on the map screen which each represent – once you've moved to combat mode – a single screen. Once you're in combat mode you'll see the ground is made up of lots of smaller hexes too – each individual character's moves are made from hex to hex, and when two guys from opposing 'teams' meet on the same hex they fight.

Anyone who's ever seen a wargame will know

Mix hex-based strategy with 8-bit classic Chaos, the result is the year's surprise success...

CELTIC 3 BADDIES 1

As you progress through *Celtic Legends*, it all starts to get immensely hectic.

There are new characters to control, new spells to cast and advancing enemy legions become, er, legion. Let's take a look at just what action can be expected by the time level three is reached.

Your character Eskel can only be in one place at a time, so with a flash of lightning a new legion of cyclopes is summoned to help out.

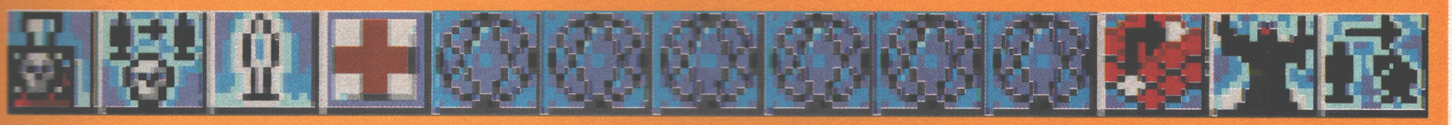
Meanwhile, back at the castle, there's a rumble going on with some unfriendly looking orcs and trolls.

And if things aren't already busy enough, there's another scrap here.

most potent of which are pentacles – natural magic 'springs' dotted around the landscape.

The range of spells available is more than wide enough to facilitate some tricksy tactical casting while in combat. The bog-standard fireball may have its uses, but interesting stunts can be pulled with such things as contagion – a life-sapping spell for devotees of biological warfare – and teleport, whereby you can shift the most powerful creature on your side straight into the ranks of the enemy and watch the critters fall like nine-pins. Oh glory.

Magic is only restricted by the number of points you have, but they are fairly easy to amass, relieving *Legends* of the 'I'd make more of my wizards, but they're crap in a fight and take ages to cast something useful' syndrome inherent to some role-playing systems. Again, this all adds to the action-based nature of the game. Sorcery during combat is speedy and everything that you cast has a real effect on the outcome. Happily it's away with lengthy incantations – splatter-gun sorcery is on tap here.



LEGENDS

exactly how this works.

So what's new? Well, quite a bit as it turns out. For a start, the game sets out to free the player from all the tedious mucking about with basic human needs and petty actions – eating, sleeping, going to the loo and so on – that seem to pervade the hard core of role-playing games. *Legends* offers an action-orientated to-do which, through losing much in the reality stakes, should help it find favour with the blood-and-guts brigade. It also completely dispenses with D&D's obsession with parties of characters and quests and the like – it's all-out war we're talking here.

THE CELTIC PITCH FOR SUCCESS

The game kicks off with a strikingly impressive parallax-scrolling intro screen (presentation is generally top-notch), quickly whizzes you through the choice of one or two-player option, then gives you a strategic view of the particular isle chosen for conquest. Things start off easily enough: you're standing about near a castle and have several legions of soldiers at hand to do your bidding. The enemy is shown as a red figure at the other end of the island and it's up to you to acquire the wherewithall with which to smite him.

And boy, there're a zillion ways to go about it. The game really scores on the number of combat options at your command, from direct sword-wielding confrontation between two characters to your using a welter of cunning spells. As you progress through the levels you gain the ability use higher level magic and your henchmen become more able fighters – during combat, statistics on both your forces and the enemy's are conveniently shown at the edges of the tactical screen, which makes the matching of adversaries to your own advantage a quick and painless affair.

Such fun tactics as blasting the opposition with fireballs, giving them diseases and transforming friendly troops into more powerful fighters make the early stages of the game a right old roisterous romp not unreminiscent of the fights in *Populous*. Don't be mislead by the initial impression that Legends is a little too easy, though! Each successive campaign gets more vicious as bigger, badder and bolder monsters begin enter the fray – you'll find you've soon got more work cut out for you than a Beirut brickie.

So how do you actually go about trying to win? Well, to start off with, the use of magic is vital. Only efficient use of magic can ensure you sufficient firepower to counter the gathering momentum of Sogrom's campaign, providing a whole battery of spells, from simple fireballs to the all-encompassing *Fatal Fire* – the last word in anti-personnel conjuration – which handily zaps every foe on the screen. Similarly, magic enables you to create new legions of entities to join in the good fight at any of a number of pentacles found in the castles and sacred sites that litter the landscape – at lower levels, more soldiers and expert fighters called Lords can be summoned, but as your powers increase, such fiendish creatures as cyclopes and archangels can be called.

The strategic screen shows the fullness of your task – to wipe all nasties from the face of Hadès island.

You'll certainly need your creature chums too. Sogrom is no slouch when it comes to world domination and his efforts become more formidable from island to island. I frequently found myself in all kinds of bother as his forces streamed across the landscape, picking off my weaker legions and isolating Eskel from strategy-saving magic sites. As mentioned before, fans of Julian Gollop's *Chaos* will be familiar with much of the gameplay – in fact, the whole game comes across as 60 percent *Chaos*, 40 percent wargame (if you can imagine that).

From the opening screens *Celtic Legends* is a very good looking game. Graphics and sound are generally impressive, although it has to be said that some of the sprites move in decidedly mysterious ways – soldiers twitch their weapons about as if afflicted with St Vitus' dance when they're not fighting, for instance. Even so, combat is a hoot to watch, particularly when a cyclops lays in with his club, say, or spells like Transformation and Teleport are used, accompanied by a theatrical puff of smoke. The backgrounds to the tactical screens are full of nice touches too – snow in the mountains, the sun glistening on the sea in fenland – and atmospheric sound effects of frogs breeking or the wind howling complete the picture.

The only dodgy bits really are the game's speed and agility. The computer opponent takes quite some time to decide its moves, which – while giving you time to think – rather detracts from the all-action impetus. And it's impossible to move your legions through hexes occupied by friendly legions for some reason too, which leads to strategic headaches on narrow terrain.

But overall, the game is a winner. It looks good, has plenty of action and there are numerous ways to win each fracas, be it a simple punch up on the tactical screen or a long-range action plan over a whole island. Such scope means all the controls on offer must be used to the full – there's no cure-all combination of spells and moves that will work in any given scenario. As such, *Celtic Legends* proves a real challenge to master even against the computer player, while the two-player option brings to light numerous new ways of completing the game. Rather surprisingly, it proves to be absolutely fab.

● ***KARL FOSTER***

"Eh up lads, there's one of them 'orrible enemy wizards about to cast something nasty at us. Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough."

"Oh bother, he's brought his mates with him. Well, can't back out now – we'll just have to hop from hex to hex in an intimidating fashion."

"Ulp! We're getting completely slaughtered. I told you we should never have gone to the tactical screen. Er... perhaps we could just talk this over?"

UPPERS Plenty of strategy plus plenty of action plus great presentation make for a more than passable role-playing challenge. For those into interesting ways to present strategy games – or missing the *Chaos* style of gameplay – it's a Godsend.

DOWNERS The ponderous computer opponent won't break any speed records – in fact, it's a bit of a pain especially for something that is in many ways an action orientated game. All the more reason to play against a friend, really.

THE BOTTOM LINE

More than enough brainstorming and hack 'n' slay to keep you in jollies for ages. If FRP, strategy or plain and simple killing appeal, well worth looking out for.

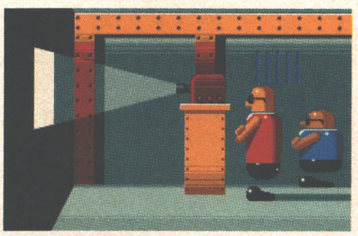
89 PERCENT

BONAN

The story behind *Bonanza Bros* unfolds before your very eyes in the form of a simple, sparingly animated sequence...

Sega coin-op conversions are known for snazzy gimmicks,

Game: Bonanza Bros
Publisher: US Gold
Price: £25.99
Authors: Twilight
Release: Out Now



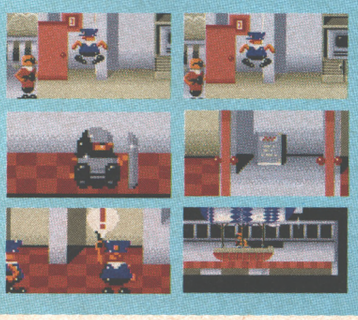
Before each mission begins, Mobo and Robo are given a briefing which details the items

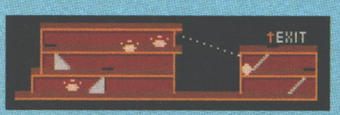
What have arcade and console kings Sega ever done for us, eh? So they got the ball rolling with hydraulic excuses for arcade entertainment (*Space Harrier, OutRun* et al), and – indeed – are continuing to bring the arcade machine closer to being a fairground attraction than ever, but so what? When it comes to producing full-blooded playability, Sega have done nothing for me. (Well, apart from *Sonic The Hedgehog*). Almost without exception, everything Sega have ever released has fallen short of the mark, playability wise. Their wares always seem to have healthy bones but never enough real 'meat' on them – and *Bonanza Bros* proves no exception.

THE 10 WONDERS OF THE BONANZA BROS WORLD. SIX HERE...

LEVEL 1 The Bonanza Bros' first stop is the Bank where they meet two members of the security force. Every location has at least two floors, linked by stairways, containing rooms packed with obstacles and separated by doors which open and close at the touch of a button. The doors make a convenient ad hoc (and slapstick) weapon – open one in the face of an adversary and he's knocked, temporarily dazed, to the floor. But beware – some members of the security force are likely to return the 'favour'.

Luckily, Mobo and Robo carry stun guns capable of putting members of the security force on their backs for a few vital seconds.





LEVEL 2 Stage Two is Mr Big's Mansion, which is guarded by the 'standard' security force along with the big, bomb-throwing Bruisers who make their debut. Mobo and Robo should also keep 'em peeled for soft drink cans and rakes lying around on the floor. A simple pulley system provides a means of travelling between the two areas of the building. It certainly beats taking a head-bashing dive to the ground floor far below...

ZA BROS

not depth of gameplay. Could this be the one to prove they *can* do it (if they try)?

That said though, *Bonanza Bros* is probably the most impressive Sega creation to date. And here's the reason why – the Bros have style, something sadly missing from most computer software today. Robo (the short fat one) and Mobo (the tall thin one) are two small-time crooks with big hearts, who've decided to go straight. Which is why a mysterious stranger, sick and tired of having his property burgled every five minutes, has 'employed' the boys to test his security force. If the Bros can retrieve the items placed by 'Mr X' in various heavily guarded locations, he will reward them. And that is all.

The game consists of 10 such situations, each with its own theme (see THE 10 WONDERS OF THE BONANZA BROS WORLD). The security force the boys find themselves testing consists of living guards (see MEET THE SECURITY FORCE) as opposed to complex electronic systems. Then there are a few 'natural' hazards to contend with, too, such as rakes and soft drink cans which have been carelessly left lying around.

"A visual approach which is distinctive and attractive"

Bonanza Bros' scenery and cast have a slick and realistic look to them – almost like those computer-generated cartoons which are becoming increasingly elaborate by the minute. Here is a visual approach which is distinctive and attractive, yes, but also somehow serves to create the illusion of more depth of play than actually exists. With any luck it will inspire other authors to experiment, and we'll see a host of releases that look wildly different from anything that's come before. (We can but hope).

Unfortunately, this Amiga conversion doesn't look quite as clean and wholesome on screen as the game does in the arcades (the visuals are smaller and less detailed than in the original arcade machine), but everything else seems to have survived the process of translation intact, and the result stands proud. A bravely different game then, and one you can't help

LEVEL 3 Atop the Goldrush Casino, which is where we are now, there are springs which shoot Mobo and Robo high into the air – and over otherwise impassable obstacles. (If only the game made more of this...)

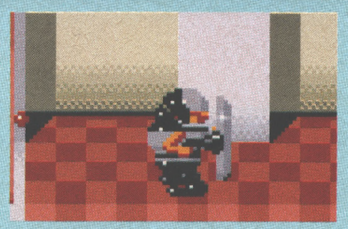
LEVEL 4 The Royal Mint offers an alternative means of temporarily disabling the security force. Crushers – operated with a simple lever mechanism – squash flat anything they hit. Real cartoon stuff...

LEVEL 5 A brief, non-interactive mine cart ride precedes the pretty-much-the-same-as-seen-on-previous-levels-(but-erm-underground) action in the Gold Mine.

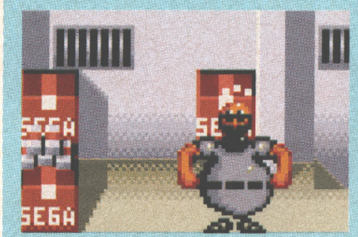
LEVEL 6 Collect the sparklers from the Jewelry Store and, erm, that's it. (Not much to this level really...)

MEET THE SECURITY FORCE (THEY'RE OUT TO STOP YOU)

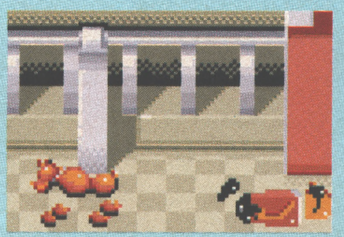
Security Guards come in two different forms. The first type patrols a set path and either shoots at Mobo and Robo or attempts to beat them with a truncheon (left). The other sleeps until he's woken by the boys' presence (right). A single shot is enough to send a Security Guard tumbling on his back with his legs kicking in the air.



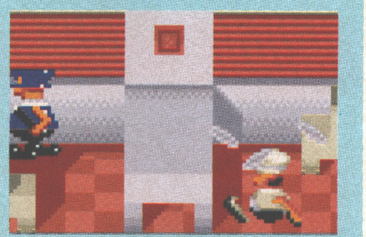
Armed Guards patrol simple routes, carrying a shield and a gun which they aren't afraid to use. A single shot to the body puts them in a spin though.



Bruisers are these big fat beggars who throw bombs at you and take three good hits to knock down.



Dogs are dumb. Some simply lie still and take whatever the boys throw at them, while others are a tad more dangerous.



Chefs are complete divs. They run about in a dither, bumping into things and throwing plates in the air as they fall.

feeling something for – though as entertainment in its own right, *Bonanza Bros* is not without fault.

The biggest flaw is a lack of depth. The action comprises of little more than trotting around, finding hiding places to avoid getting shot up, and shooting the security force or slamming doors in their faces while scoping the scene for loot. It's a formula for a fun time to be sure, but not for long – there are only 10 not-entirely-sizeable stages to complete, and there's precious little scope for experimental play.

And that's not the only problem. The obvious potential of the subject matter hasn't been taken to the extremes it should either – the situation should have thrown up much more interesting puzzles, traps and whatnot than are found here. Equally, the ever present promise of hours of slapstick fun never fully materialises – Mobo and Robo slip over on Coke cans and tread on rakes that hit their faces, but that's as far as it goes. Other characters aren't affected by these obstacles at all!

"The obvious potential of the subject matter hasn't been taken to the extremes it should either"

A more varied security force would have been appreciated too, but it's more of a pity that the existing cast doesn't interact with each other enough. It'd have been fun to be able to trick two Security Guards into shooting each other or blowing each other up, but no. It'd have been nice to see lone and hard done by Security Guards calling on their copper mates to come and give the boys a good kicking, like in the bonus stage (see THE BONUS STAGE), but nah. And it'd have been great to see more use of the doors (what if you shut one in the face of a burglar-hungry dog, leaving it in such a mental state that it mauled the first character it came across – preferably the other Bonanza brother for some top-notch two-player twists?) but you know what I'm going to say, don't you? That's not in here either. The two player possibilities of the game haven't been explored at all (in fact, having both brothers involved tends to slow down the action in this conversion, though not to an unplayable extent).

I don't know. It's as though the designers ran out of ideas or time and so the theme hasn't been developed enough. Maybe it's a dry run for something bigger and better – who knows? Come on Sega. More, please. More Mobo. More Robo. And, most importantly, more content.

● *GARY PENN*

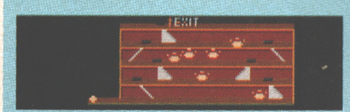
UPPERS An original(ish) theme complemented by a unique and interesting visual approach. And it's fun to play, too. At last, a Sega game you can really say has character!

DOWNERS What's there is a right laugh, but only for 10 limited scenarios. A promising theme left almost criminally unexplored.

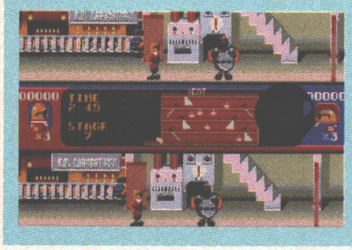
THE BOTTOM LINE
Stylish, but lacking in longevity. Like Storms' recent *Rodland*, *Bonanza Bros* is more of a snack than a full-blown nine-course meal (but it's tasty, tasty, very very tasty, all the same).

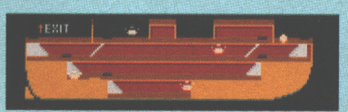
81 PERCENT

...AND FOUR OVER ON THIS PAGE!

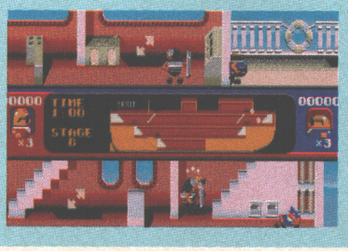


LEVEL 7 The only surprise in the Laboratory is the fact that there aren't any surprises. What a waste – when you're finding it hard to write about a level you *know* the game's in trouble.

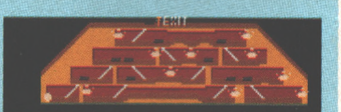




LEVEL 8 Mr Big's Yaught. A 'Yaught' is in fact a yacht in case you hadn't guessed. Mr Big is nowhere to be seen. Did he fall overboard or was he pushed in some spooky premonition of (*Snip! -Ed*)



LEVEL 9 Almost there now. Various objects of artistic value have to be taken from inside the Modern Art Museum...

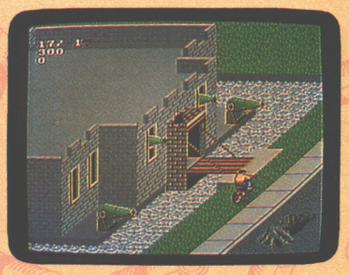


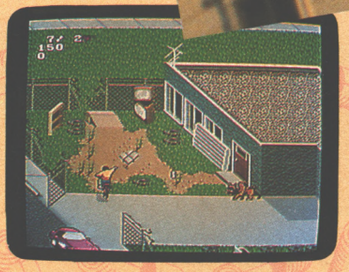
LEVEL 10 ...while the final stage is set inside a large Pyramid (whoever he is, this mysterious stranger certainly has rather eccentric tastes...)

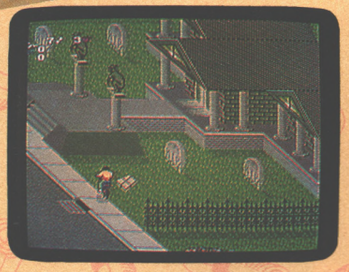
Look out - he's back!

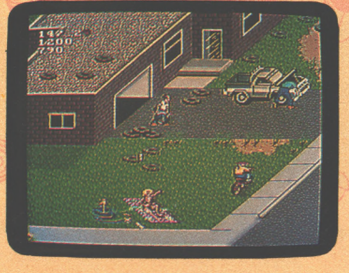
PAPERBOY 2

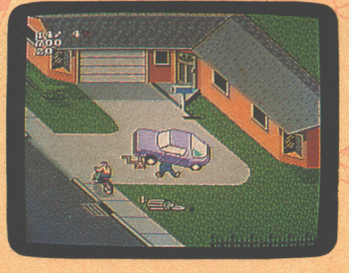
No window is safe. No fence is too high. The paperboy is determined to deliver the paper to his subscribers any way he can. Tossing papers left and right, riding in three directions, jumping anything, this free-wheeling carrier visits more neighbourhoods and houses, faces more targets and obstacles, in more vivid colours than ever before.
Plus, rad stunt riding and BMX tracks in bonus rounds. Choose to ride as either Paperboy or Papergirl too!











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MINDSCAPE

For your local dealer, contact **Mindscape International Ltd,** The Coach House, Hooklands Estate, Scaynes Hill, West Sussex RH17 7NG. Tel: 0444 831 761

It may not be the first game to offer a heady mix of hack-'em-up and FRP, but it's

Publisher: Mindscape
Price: £30.99
Author: Anderson Art Studios
Release: Out now

The main action screen in *Moonstone* – this is where your knight is usually mauled, scratched, bitten, sliced or decapitated (or he will be until you get good at this fighting lark). Here we see a charming Troll-like creature just about to polish you off. Ho hum.

This is an odd one. Not just in the details, though some of these are odd – what other game has a gore on/gore off option, allowing you to decide whether the fight sequences are to be blood spattered affairs or not? – but in the basic concept. Part fantasy role playing game, part *Barbarian*-style hack-'em-up, it threatens from the minute you pick it up to to fall with unerring accuracy right between two stools – just like all those other 'odd' American PC games which never quite look right on the Amiga. Still, let's see how it does, shall we?

The game, originally to have been called *Quest For The Moonstone*, but now subtitled (ahem) *A Hard Day's Knight*, puts you (surprisingly enough) on a quest for well, the moonstone. Once in a thousand years does Danu, the moon god, bless the earth with his attention apparently, and a quick glance at the night sky tells you the time is now – word spreads quickly, and the bravest knights of the land join in the quest. You're one of them, of course – the prize is Ultimate Power (for the rest of eternity, no less), which will be granted you once you've located the stone and offered it to Danu at his sacred site of Stonehenge. As you might imagine, though, it's not going to be easy – every knight in the country has been lured to the same goal, and with four huge territories to explore, a weaker soul could well rate his chances so pathetically low that the whole thing's not worth bothering with at all, really.

Of course you are made of sterner stuff. So after deciding which of the four knights you'll represent (merely a choice of colours really – red, blue, yellow or green – all characters starting with the same basic stats) and seeing if you can round up any pals to take the other three roles, it's time for the off. You start off with a map screen, icons dotted around it representing the four knights. One 'move' is allowed per day, and so using your joystick you shunt your man to wherever it is you fancy having a little explore of. The other three knights also move and (assuming two or more of you don't end up in the same place at the same time), the day's events unfold.

There are lots of 'places of interest' dotted around the map, and visiting different locations will throw you into a whole variety of situations. In fact, deciding which place to visit is a bit like picking an envelope at the end of Blind Date – there's always the chance that you might return better off than you arrived, but there's no telling what you'll have to endure in the process. Continuing the same analogy, you may also find yourself mortifyingly incompatible with the person you find there. And such personality clashes invariably result in a level of violence that would make Cilla shudder.

A LORRA, LORRA BIG NASTIES

Make no mistake – there's a very high chance that you'll have to fight for whatever treasure (or anything else really) you find at any of the locations, which brings us to the game's main set-piece, the gory beat-'em-up scenes. Other knights, monsters (foul orc-like creatures that come in countless hideous shapes and sizes, just like in Blind Date) and even the odd flying dragon – each will do his (or in some unhappy situations, *their*) dastardly best to halt your progress. And in many cases they'll do pretty well at it too.

As a knight, you come complete with a basic set of weapons: a sword; a canteen of throwing-knives; some armour; and eight different combat moves. The hardware can all be upgraded if you manage to find a merchant, but only if you've collected enough money along the way to pay him. It's a vicious circle really – you can only cut a manly swathe through the swarming hoards with the right weapons, and you can only earn money to buy these weapons by killing loads of baddies. Oh dear...

It doesn't end there though. Forget

MOONSTO

A KNIGHT OUT & ABOUT

So here it is, a whole new world to seek out and bravely explore. (Luckily it's not too big).

Your knight, and your three rivals in the game, are represented by icons that move about the map.

There are two cities to explore – within their walls you'll find healers (private and expensive), taverns, and merchants. Well worth a visit when your cash gets heavy...

Lairs – here's one – are where monsters live. Here your task is basically to kill everything in sight, then seize whatever treasure it is you may find there.

Stonehenge is one groovy location. Offering a magic object will be rewarded with a health bonus – this is where you must (eventually) bring the Moonstone.

The wizard's tower is well worth a butchers. Visiting will reward you with some goody or another, but his temper soon blackens if you visit too often.

the first to include a gore on/off option!

the number of pints of lager you can drink without falling over – it's a combination of Strength and Constitution that determines your 'ardness in a ruck, and these only come with time. Your Strength determines how hard you hit your foe, Constitution determines how much physical punishment you can take without ending up as a kebab yourself, while another rating – Endurance – determines how far you can travel each day.

All three of these factors can be enhanced through collecting magical items, receiving gifts from the Mystic or wizard and – most effectively – through gaining 'experience' points. It's the usual routine – kill a few baddies, collect a few objects, wander about a bit and before too long you'll find that your ratings have risen a couple of notches. These increases are largely irrelevant however, because – in

NE

the time-honoured tradition of the genre – as you get tougher, so do the baddies.

Finally, if things are all starting to go horribly wrong, and your energies are almost spent, you can always go home for a bit of R and R. Villages are designated to each knight – return to your home village (none of the other knights are let in) and the local druid will restore some of your energy for free. You can do this three times in every game, so whatever you do – don't forget which village is yours!

Which all, in a roundabout sort of a way, brings us back to the central question of the game – where is this moonstone, this magical pebble of earth-shattering importance, anyway? In the Valley Of The Gods, you are sagely informed. But where, exactly, remains a secret. To gain access to the Valley Of The Gods requires the four sacred keys, and there's one key to be found in each of the four territories. The task is simple – collect the keys, put on your grooviest pair of fighting pants and enter the valley for your final challenge. Emerge victorious, and you've won.

And that, my brave warrior, is your lot. Almost. There's a sting in the tale, you see. There isn't just one moonstone, but several. And each moonstone needs to be presented at Stonehenge at a time related to the cycle of the moon. And if you find yourself as the right person, at the right place, with the right object but at the wrong time – well, tough luck matey. You'll have to sit and wait. Except that by this time of course, word's out and everything that moves is after you – you'll have to fight off all-comers until each passing day nudges the moon cycle towards parity with the stone. When the time is right – and if you last that long – you'll have finally won.

Blimey. So where does that leave us? Well, as has probably become obvious, *Moonstone* seeks to combine a *Golden Axe* style beat-'em-up with elements of traditional role-playing adventures. Although the two styles of gameplay work together surprisingly well, neither has quite enough about it to appeal to fans of the individual genres. The hack-'n'-slash sequences are really a bit too fast and furious – you can die almost immediately – and lacking in need of combat skill, while the small playing area, lack of character interaction and minimal amount of big time decision making effectively writes off the RPG element.

"Moonstone has to be considered a near miss"

But that doesn't mean that *Moonstone* has nothing to offer. Through the use of glorious sound effects and graphics you could frame, the game manages to create a truly absorbing atmosphere. The intro sequence is as good as any I've seen, too, and generally this comes across as a polished, professional product. If the game underneath had a bit more to offer, it would perhaps scrape in as some sort of minor league classic. As it is though, there's just not quite enough here. Although initially entertaining (and visually a delight) *Moonstone* has to be considered a near miss – it's only with an assortment of players, and perhaps a few beers, that the computerised-board-game-with-fighting nature of the game really comes into its own.

● *NEIL WEST*

UPPERS Atmospheric visuals and sound effects combine to create a believable(ish) and spooky game world, while the four-player option adds a sense of urgency and potentially great fun. The two modes of gameplay gel together well too, requiring both subtle strategy and quick reflexes.

DOWNERS There's not enough of anything – not enough detail or sophistication is present in the hack-'n'-slash sequences, and there's not enough depth to the RPG element. Awkward disk accessing breaks the flow of the game too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A simple, arguably mediocre, game hidden beneath glossy presentation. *Moonstone* will initially capture you within its spell, but the effect soon wears off, leaving you desperate for rather more depth. Not bad, but it could have been so much better.

73 PERCENT

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY...

...can leave a guy very seriously in the red, as we'll see...

The two cities each offer four different services, so take time out and spend some of your hard-earned dosh! Both cities offer a knight to remember. (Oh dear, the knight 'jokes' are flowing thick'n'fast today).

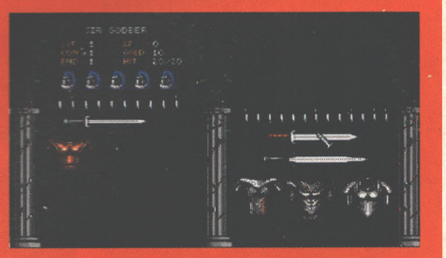
Dice is a popular game in the city's public houses. Gamble however much you want, then let lady luck decide your fortunes. The locals look a bit smug – they wouldn't be into ripping off innocent visitors now, would they?

Oh dear, lost again. That's another three gold pieces down the drain. Perhaps it would have been safer out in the wilderness with the monsters?

Madame Za-Za's spiritual shop can provide you with all sorts of magical artefacts. These can then be used at any time throughout the rest of the game. (Hurrah!)

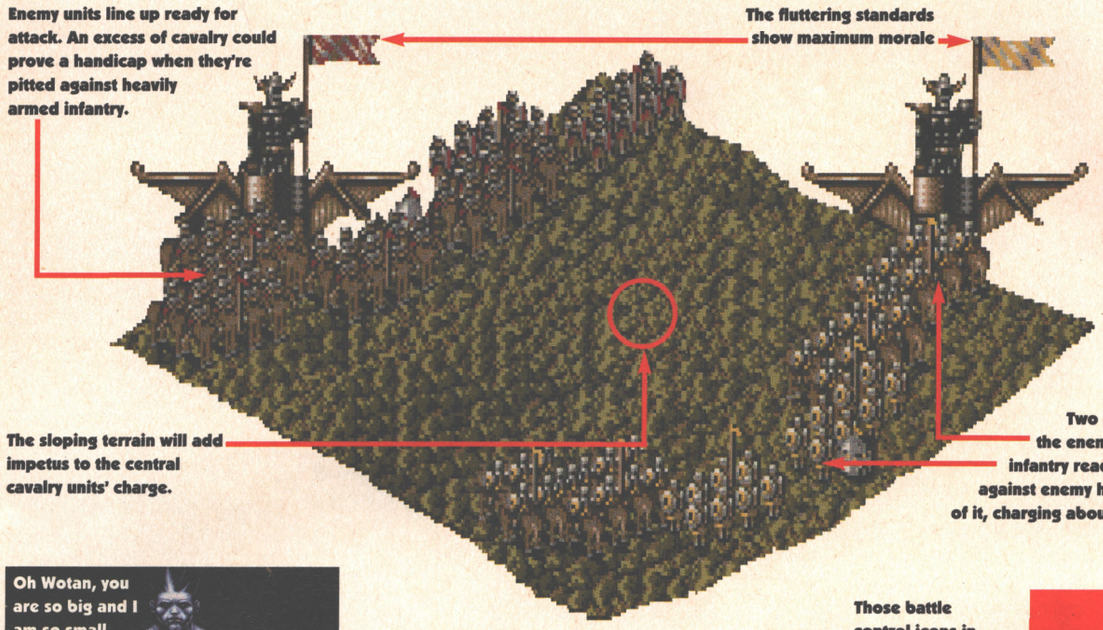
The healer – cross his palm with silver and you'll soon feel a whole lot better. He may be effective, but you can get your war-wounds patched up back at your home village for free.

Click on what you want to buy and your supply of gold is directly debited. But can you afford it? If you can't, just find yourself a monster's lair and (try to) kick some butt.



Meet Mythral the Mystic. He's renowned for his ability to lift a knight's soul to a higher cosmic plane. Give him some gold, and then just hope that he chooses to improve your abilities as opposed to lowering them. (It's a bit of a gamble really).

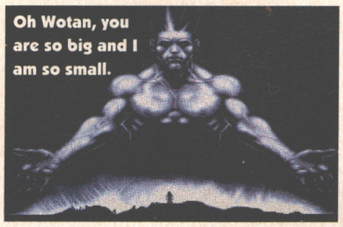
The popularizing of strategy continues with Graftgold's 'almost-a-god-sim'. Is this



INTO BATTLE

The battle screen – this is where the *real* action happens.

The armies shown here are roughly equal in size – sometimes they will be, sometimes they won't – but reinforcements can arrive at any time, and may alter the course of the whole battle...



Those battle control icons in full (from left): Chaaaarge!, change unit formation, turn left, turn right, fire missiles

RE

Game: Realms
Publisher: Virgin
Price: £29.99
Author: Graftgold
Release: December

A year ago the Bullfrog's isometric offering *Powermonger* set something of a standard for military strategy games, combining the traditional game with the style and presentation of god sims, and lo! The people saw that it was good. It's a year on, and Virgin now seek to further the sub-genre (which currently consists of, erm, *Powermonger*) with its forthcoming and really ever-so-slightly-similar-looking new release *Realms*.

Billed as more than a mere god sim or wargame, *Realms* plunges the budding acolyte into a hodge-podge world of mythical races battling for supremacy – his job is to make sure his realm trounces all the other realms to form one great big realm (hence the title) – and, for once, the billing is pretty accurate. It's not a god sim as such, more of a 'instrument of the divine will' sim – you're still a spotty-faced earthlet and unable to visit *Populous*-style divine wrath upon thine enemy, but your powers *do* extend beyond those of any real earthly commander. You get to see exactly how all your far-flung forces are faring, for instance, as well as the rather useful ability to instantly issue orders over vast distances.

The main thrust of the gameplay is strategic. Set in quasi-Nordic times, your job is to manage the affairs of a capital city, plus smaller cities and ports, while sending out armies to capture enemy cities in a bid to take over the entire game map. Curiously enough, the powers with which you are equipped to achieve this task are handed down by Wotan, not Odin (fact fans may like to note that Wotan is a Germanic name, not Nordic – there's no hard and fast sticking to real history here).

As in many things in life, success largely comes down to money. Money to feed and care for the people, recruit and equip armies, build defenses around cities and bribe elements of the opposition into fragile alliance. To make more money, you nobble enemy satellite cities with a view to taking out the capital and absorbing the entire neighbouring realm into your own – "there can only be one..." says the packaging, in true Highlander tradition.

"The battle scenes make for a striking cross-appeal"

Okay, so how does it play? Well, once you've chosen which realm and thus which race to be – elvish, orcish, Amazonian, barbarian or dwarvish – it's time to build up your forces and resources ready for a spot of annex-'em-up action. There's a fair old bit to do as the game progresses. Not only do you have to keep equipping armies and making sure the peasants are fed, there's the ever present threat of covetous enemy forces sieging your own strongholds too.

Messages on the state of play are relayed via a message crystal which, when the going gets busy, pings away like a thing possessed. It's not a clever idea to ignore this – I found it best to at least keep an eye on the messages coming back as, while I was busily engaged ordering troops about, my city communities were starving and all set for revolt. Salvaging such situations requires much deft manipulation of the various icon-driven control screens. They're not spectacularly intuitive to use and there's much swapping back and forth between them to keep your realm from crumbling – we've certainly seen better.

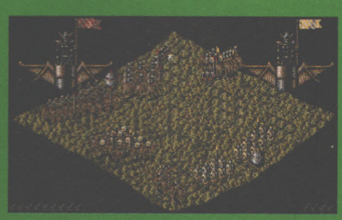
If by now it's all sounding like an accountant's dream and a psychopath's nightmare, don't fret your blood-crazed sensibilities. There is action to be had when two armies collide, and pretty finely tuned it is too. When equipping an army, there's the opportunity to create cavalry or infantry, armed as light or heavy units, and to equip them with a variety of offensive weaponry. Different races have different weapon skills – for example, elves and

WHACK TIME

Battles, as any good general will bark at you, are *not* just won in the heat of melee.

Oh no, a certain amount of planning is essential for victory. Here we show a small skirmish, and how I managed to win the blooming thing. Beginner's luck..?

First off, make sure to arm your conscripts well and pay them enough to ensure their undying loyalty.



Into the field, and my cavalry appears to be making mincemeat out of the enemy's advance on the right.

the wargame to beat the phenomenal crossover success of *Powermonger*?

orcs are hot-shots with missiles – and the reliability of an army comes down to its morale which, as with most things in life, is governed by how much you pay them.

OUT IN THE BLOOD-SOAKED FIELDS

All this mucking around with weapons and wages becomes relevant on the battle screen. This is the best part of the game: ranging your own units across a close-up view of the terrain while enemy forces leave their positions and prepare to sally forth. Units of your own army can be pointed in any direction (even about-face for a nifty retreat) and made to adopt different formations – things like wedges, phalanxes and our old friend, the defensive square.

Again, the control icons confused me for a while and I had my troops firing arrows at each other while the cavalry went careening off sideways. But, once I'd got the hang of it, the level of control offered over individual units, combined with the speed of the exchange, had me chasing armies around the game world in sabre-rattling glee just looking for a fight (and paying scant regard to the game's main objective).

Speaking of which, *Realms* does have one or two irritating little foibles up its... wherever its foibles are kept. The obvious course to take in the pursuit of world dominance would be to pick off smaller neighbouring cities and gradually absorb another realm until you can take a crack at its capital city. This is pretty much what the computer opponent tries to get away with. I tried this in the first few of the 10 progressively more difficult game scenarios on offer, and while I laud the inclusion of such realistic factors as the morale of foreign races press-ganged into one's own army and the food and health concerns of civilian communities, all this detail tended to muddy the metaphorical waters of my cunning, if piecemeal, plan. Several times, while trying to get dispirited mobs of conscripts off their backsides and into the fray, I became completely bogged down with pinging messages informing me that people in one or another city were starving. This meant leaving the action to muck about buying grain, building up the city and otherwise trying to keep the peasants from storming the Winter Palace.

"Ah, but that's the whole point – as realms expand, the greater their internal problems," you may say. Well, yes, fair enough, if we're being realistic about it all, I guess – that's what you get when you give your little computer people a semblance of free will. Me, though – I'd rather have done without all that stuff. I wonder if it wouldn't have been more tactical, wargaming fun without so many extra problems to worry about.

Anyway, back with me playing the game, and what this all boiled down to was that is was high time for a tactical change of tack. A bit of thinking and I found a method that worked too – though unfortunately, the optimum way of dealing with all this grumbling discontent while swiftly achieving victory rather knackers the earlier levels' longevity of gameplay.

So, the busy tyrant's guide to a quick win: rapidly build up a medium-sized army by levying the bejeezus out of the citizens, head straight for the enemy capitals, raze them to the ground one by one (the opposing forces haven't yet had time to amass a worthwhile army) and boof, that's that.

However, as you progress, the game map and the forces ranged against you become rapidly more challenging. Enemy realms become more numerous and more vigorous in their territorial ambitions; fewer resources become available, and the action takes on a frenetic edge as you try to keep armies on target while desperately running around keeping your cities from devolving.

This struggle to keep track of everything while striving for world dominance pitches *Realms* solidly in the strategy buff's camp, but the battle scenes make for a striking cross-appeal. They're fast, detailed – even the slope of the terrain is taken into account – and you have a direct effect on the course of conflict. There are even dead bodies littered all over the place after an exchange. In fact, the battlefield screen is more of a game within a game, requiring a completely different method of play. Consequently I spent much of the time arranging no-win scenarios in the wider game just so I could mess around with different troop formations and attack tactics in battle.

I like *Realms* a lot, and (to be honest) I wasn't too sure if I would at first. The game's underlying design philosophy is well sorted, the battle scenes (at least) will appeal to most open minded games players, while the forthcoming extra data disks make it a good long-term bet for any budding imperialist. A specialist taste, certainly, but if you even *think* you might like it, you probably will.

● *KARL FOSTER*

Bad times in the Dwarves' capital city. My orcs have once again proved more than a match for the feeble efforts of the enemy, (cackle cackle) so now for the coup de grâce...

...let's raze that sucker to the ground. I get 999 pieces of gold, they get a heap of matchwood, but all's fair in love and war. They'd do the same to my capital if they could. (But they can't!)

The conquering hero gets the girly. Some things never change.

As the infantry moves forward at the centre, loosing arrows as they go, cavalry reinforcements enter to the right.

Enemy cavalry flees the field in the face of determined infantry attack while hand-to-hand fighting hots up mid-field.

The field is littered with the corpses of the vanquished, while the enemy's standard shows his morale to be broken.

UPPERS An interesting and slickly presented variation on the *Kingdoms* theme most spectacularly exploited by *Powermonger*. The great battle sequences really make the game, even if they *are* a little short in duration. Even the background music takes longer to become an irritating distraction than is usual.

DOWNERS It gets frustrating at times as there can be just too much routine realm-keeping to manage and, given long enough, the background music will drive you nuts. The control icons could be a bit more obvious.

THE BOTTOM LINE

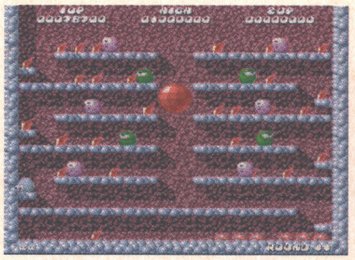
Basically, a terrific game. It'll take a little getting used to, but *Realms* offers sufficient brain burn to make it a challenge rather than a drag.

84 PERCENT

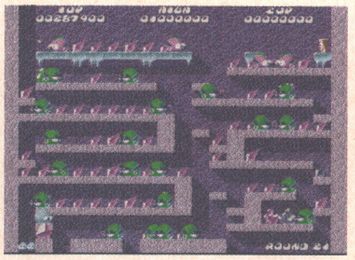
Game: Fuzzball
Publisher: System 3
Price: £19.99
Authors: Scan Games
Release: Out now

FUZZBA

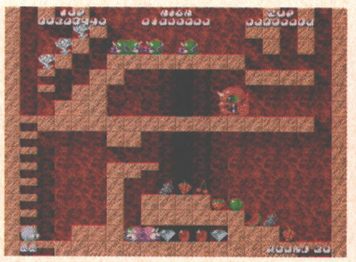
Change of tune dept: System 3 swap traditional black belts for cutesy puzzling wit



Bubbles yes, but no Bobble – watch out for all-new fuzzies that arrive this level.



Level 24 is picturesque purple affair, packed with whole families of fuzzies...



...while here we are in meanie city, a giant mutha of a fuzzball patrolling the centre...

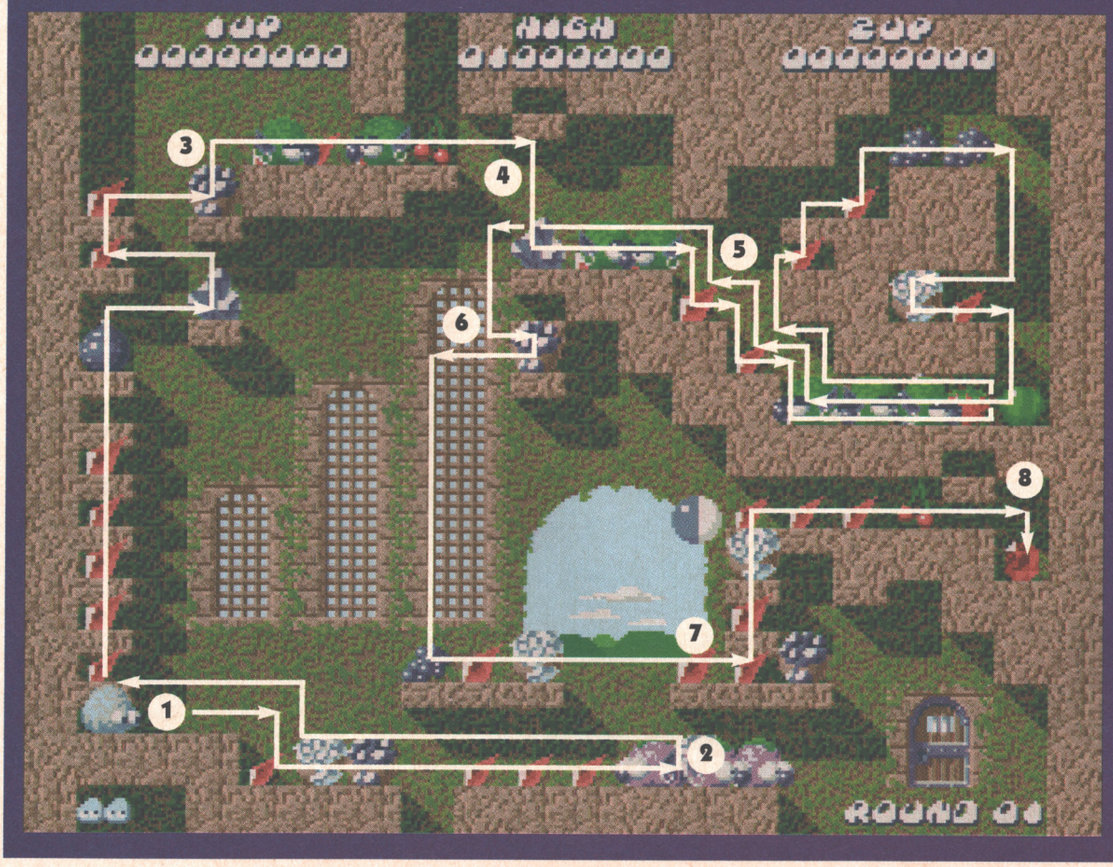
They're small, they're round, they bounce along on the ground, they're fuzzy balls. They're also the rather appealing Gremlin-like stars of System 3's new and interestingly priced (ie five quid cheaper than usual) arcade platform puzzle game thing, titled (logically enough) *Fuzzball*. And, as the AMIGA POWER team are well known suckers for anything cute and platformy, their game was one of the most eagerly awaited arrivals in the office this month. Let's see how it does, shall we? (And remember, this may a cute game, but you'll find no soft, fluffy or spongy reviewing here).

A most impressive Fantasia-style Sorcerer's Apprentice animated intro kicks things off. This sets the scene, showing how curiosity not only killed the cat, but tempted a curious young wizard into setting loose a crate of malicious lumps of fur, which then zoomed away to infest every corner of the castle. Accidentally turning himself into another (similarly small and squishy) furball in a doomed attempt to fix his cock-up, our hero is set the task of rounding up the furry louts, leaving the castle clean of any troublesome tribble-like creatures.

All well and good then – though like many animated intros this does leave you looking at the same picture a mite too long each time – and it's onto the game proper, where we find a 50 screen castle of platforms, ladders, goodies to collect, and (of course) fuzzballs. First impressions are of a bold, eye-pleasing and *Bubble Bobble*-influenced puzzle game. A few plays, however, reveals that a squishy fuzzball isn't quite as easy to handle as our old friends Bub and Bob...

On each screen a motley collection of fuzzballs (complete with fetching ear-rings) maliciously hop back and forth along the platforms, just waiting for our Fuzzy to make a move. It's at this point that Fuzzy's trusty anti-fuzzball ammo comes in handy – a couple of blasts are needed to mutate an enemy fuzzball into a smaller, harmless blob, which then needs collecting. Failure to do so within a couple of seconds results

FRANTIC FURRY FUZZBALL FUN AND FROLICS WITH FREAKY FRUIT (PHEW!)



1 Fuzzy begins his 50 screen quest here. It's then a short waddle and jump over to those four green meanies patrolling the bottom platform.

2 Having blobified the fuzzballs with some quick blasting, it's back over to the left again, and then upwards.

3 Shooting the two purple nasties, then quickly leaping onto the platform should do the trick.

4 Timing is essential here. Wait for the right moment, then drop down and blast the unsuspecting fuzzies!

5 It gets a bit complicated around here. Drop down, blast the fuzzballs, then jump up (collecting the gems as you go), drop down the right hand side, then jump back to (4). Easy.

6 This bit is easier than it looks. Let Fuzzy drop, then quickly pull right on the joystick. The little guy should then ease into that platform, and collect the goodie in the process.

7 Getting past the beachball is easy peasy. Wait for the ball to move down towards the platform, then jump.

8 Collect this last piece of fruit, and that's the first screen completed!

Things start getting pretty slippery around about here – watch out for all that ice!

in the fuzzball growing back as a harder, meaner and altogether more unsavoury creature – one who requires even more blasts to turn him back into blob form. Subsequent screw-ups on the same fuzzball ultimately result in one mean mutha of a red nasty, who darts back and forth (jumping platforms without a care) in mutant frenzy. This is problem number one – once you've created even the softest of mutant fuzzballs (and it's very

...lethal balls of fluff...

easy to do, the time given to collect each harmless blob being so short) you've effectively mucked up the game, and it's just as good an idea to deliberately die and start again as it is to try and combat the beasts. As you can guess, its a good idea to get it right first time.

Then there's problem number two. The control system in *Fuzzball* takes some time to get to grips with, to say the least. A jump can only be performed when our Fuzzy has his squishy body firmly fixed to the platform surface – fast and furious jumping is not the name of the game. Movement simply isn't as free and easy as it should be, though to be fair, Fuzzy's trajectory can be fine tuned once he's in the air, his left and right movement being completely under the player's control. This makes it possible to drop down onto ledges which are actually directly below the current one. Many players in the office have found it difficult to come to terms with these unusual characteristics, but I have to say I found an hour or so was enough to familiarise myself with most of Fuzzy's little quirks.

"There're some aspects which are just great, some just grate"

And while we're at it there's problem number three – a seeming total lack of restart points. Once you've finally completed the first screen – and this has to be one of the trickiest first screens in recent memory – you're put onto the second one with another three lives. Waste these (and we managed to no problem) and you're right back into the trials and tribulations of screen one again. Aargh! With a ten second loading break between reach new game this soon becomes foot-through-the-TV-screen frustrating.

BUT - HEY! - HE'S STILL CUTE

But whoa, we're being a bit negative here. Beyond the first *Fuzzy* frustrations, it soon becomes apparent that there's quite an interesting game in here. Beneath the arcade-platform exterior there's quite a bit of puzzling to be done. Careful planning is needed to complete each screen – often only doing things in a set order will manage it. Slick joystick skills alone aren't enough, and it's this unusual aspect of the game which prevents *Fuzzball* being criticised as a second-rate *Bubble Bobble* – it's actually rather different.

The final part of this hairy game equation comes in the form of a host of other nasties which patrol the castle. What they're doing there I don't know – what I *do* know is that one touch sends poor Fuzzy to fuzzball heaven. These range from a fairly innocent-looking beach ball on level one (who'd expect a beach ball to be deadly for goodness sake?) to whizzing coins and what look suspiciously like extra power tokens to be collected. These, in fact, turn out to be as deadly as any of Fuzzy's other enemies, which strikes me as just plain stupid. When a circle with the letter 'T' bounces up and down, my immediate reaction is to collect the bleeding thing, not avoid it – it's one of the conventions of gameplaying, and going against it seems simply perverse.

And that's the basic structure of the game really. There's little else to say, except that in addition to the 50 main levels, there're also five hidden bonus rooms to be found – a quick respite from the main game, and a chance to gain lots of extra points.

I must admit to rather a liking for *Fuzzball* – it's a game with real charm. The satisfying squelch Fuzzy makes when landing on a ledge is a particularly magical touch – it gives him character, and ties in with his quirky jumping style – while the bold, colourful graphics are another plus point. Although it's a 2D platform game, a slight 3D shadow effect gives depth to the surprisingly-detailed backgrounds.

You can't deny you won't get a lot of game-time out of it either. Even once the first couple of screens have been mastered (no mean feat), cockiness is not recommended. There're still the other 48 levels to get through, which should provide more than enough playing time for even the best games players – each one lasting at least a couple of minutes (and usually requiring several plays to suss out). The price point is good news too – there's certainly £20 worth of good, clean, hairy fun lurking in here. For once nobody's getting ripped off.

That said though, it's not the game it ought to be. Nearly all the faults are of the scrappy playtesting type and could be fixed inside a week's programming work tops, but as it stands the game can prove incredibly annoying. Yes, I've got my gripes with *Fuzzball*, and they're not small at that.

THE FAILINGS WITH FUZZY BALLS

The sheer difficulty of the screens is my main problem. The nasties are just a bit too nasty (in fact they're plain vicious) and the puzzles just a bit too mean for my liking. It's not just my opinion either. Everybody who's had a go at *Fuzzball* has found it simply too frustrating – every game should have a couple of simple levels to ease the player into the structure of it for a start. This doesn't. I also still find myself getting mad at the control system. It's just a little too slow, finicky and pernickety. It may allow accurate movement, but this results in things not being 'clean' enough. Jumps and movements just can't be controlled in a simple, straightforward manner – something a bit simpler and more direct would have been a good idea. And then there are the wasps, a never-ending swarm of which appear if a screen isn't completed quickly enough. What's the point? They can't be avoided, so the game may as well deduct a life. It's infuriating, and I can't see the reasoning behind it at all (particularly on the first few screens).

My final bugbear concerns the speed at which the blasted fuzzballs return from harmless blobs into more frenzied nasties. There just isn't a reasonable amount of time in which to collect them while in blob form. And then, of course, your failure just makes the screen even harder to complete. Great! Just when the player is doing badly, the game gets even harder.

Hey ho. As you can see, there're some aspects of *Fuzzball* which are just great, and some which just grate. If it had been programmed with just a little more thought for the player, this would have been one of the best Amiga platform-cum-puzzlers around. I like it. But I don't love it. It may be cute and it may have fluff, but (ahem) that doesn't mean that its edges aren't rough.

● *MATTHEW SQUIRES*

ON THE OTHER HAND...

If this was the game that it should be, and at this price, *Fuzzball* would certainly be an 80 percenter – but it ain't. I've not been so annoyed with a game I really wanted to like in ages. The annoying controls, the ridiculous difficulty of the first couple of levels, the lack of continue options or restart points – all conspire to wreck the user-friendly *Bubble Bobble* effect. This is all stuff that a week's playtesting could have cured no problem, which makes it a crying shame. Mid 70s at best I'd say. *- Matt Bielby*

BELLY BUTTON WINDOW

It's not all fluff in the wizard's castle! This beach ball is surprisingly lethal (though it simply bounces up and down).

This little red thing is actually a goodie to collect. Points ahoy!

Rotating 3D cubes sweep left and right, knocking Fuzzy for six.

The red fuzzballs are the meanest. Avoid like crazy!

While these dark purple ones are slightly less evil (but pretty nasty all the same).

The light purple meanies are a piece of a cake to whack...

...while the green dudes are just unbelievably easy to get rid of.

And here's Fuzzy himself. (What an ugly little beggar he is!)

UPPERS Big, squishy and lovable – *Fuzzball* begs to be played. It's one of those irresistible cutesy games, marrying the platform and puzzling styles to make an intriguing (and loveably fluffy) cocktail.

DOWNERS If only it was a bit easier. A little less viciousness in the earlier screens would make all the difference. And get rid of those damned wasps!

THE BOTTOM LINE

Quite good. Good, even. But some irritating and pointless quirks of game design mean it falls well short of classic status. So nearly great it's painful to watch, though admittedly the challenge of completing all 50 levels gives it some lasting appeal. If only it was a little more forgiving.

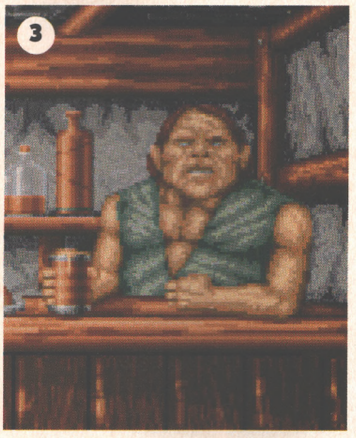
80 PERCENT

SWAP SHOP

The most complicated feature of *Barbarian II*'s gameplay is found in the shops. Here you can spend the gold stolen from the corpses of your innocent victims on new swords, beer and gossip...

1 This is actually the second weapon shop you're likely to come across. Here you can buy a throwing spear, a crossbow, a big axe or a protective helmet.

2 The first weapon shop offers you a choice of swords, a little axe, a longbow, or one of two potions which have varying effects on your health level.



3 In the inn you can get yourself a night's rest, with evening meal thrown in if you're really rich. You can also buy the landlord a drink and see if he's got news for you.

Game: Barbarian II
Publisher: Psygnosis
Price: £25.99
Authors: Mike Chilton (code), Garv Corbett, Mike Waterworth (graphics), Paul Summer (music/sound)
Release: Out now

BARBA

Before the gorgeous *Shadow Of The Beast*, Psygnosis gave us

Game titles, eh? Don't you just love 'em? First there was *Barbarian*, then there was, er, *Barbarian*, then came *Barbarian 2*, and now we've got, um, *Barbarian II*. Oh boy. Still, it's easy to tell the difference between them all, because in *Barbarian* you controlled a muscular neanderthal who ran around hacking people to bits with his big sword, whereas in the other *Barbarian* you controlled a muscular neanderthal who ran around hacking people to bits with his big sword and in *Barbarian 2* you controlled a muscular neanderthal who ran around hacking people to bits with his big sword. In this *Barbarian II*, however, you control a muscular neanderthal who runs around hacking people to bits with – oh, I give up.

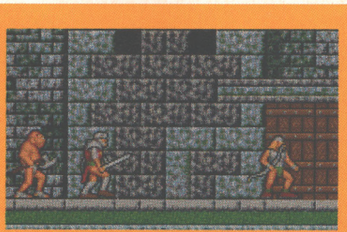
Okay, so maybe it's not quite that simplistic. Maybe as well as hacking people up you have to do quite a lot of trekking around mapping the huge game world, visiting shops, solving problems and, er, hacking people up some more. Maybe you get lots of really nifty parallax-scrolling graphics to look at in six different sub-worlds, maybe you have to find keys to open locked doors (zzzz...) and maybe you can collect several different weapons which force you to use quite different attacking strategies. Well, alright, there's no 'maybe' about it – you do indeed get all these things in *Barbarian II*, but the fact of the matter is they're just the tiniest of cosmetic additions to some of the shallowest gameplay around.

"Even the shakiest of players will find making headway presents very little difficulty"

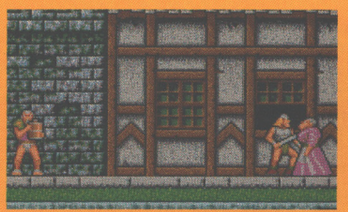
Hegor (for such is the eponymous barbarian's name) just runs – well, it's more of a mince, really – around the various levels attacking bad guys and innocent passers-by alike, collecting the gold left behind when they die, and spending it in the shops found in the later stages where better weapons, extra energy, information and so on can be bought. All of this stuff can be found lying around or stolen from other characters anyway, so what *Barbarian II* all boils down to is a hefty amount of baddy-slashing and map-making. Get yourself a really big piece of paper and set aside a day or two and you shouldn't have too many problems with it – my first game lasted almost an hour and saw 23 percent of Hegor's quest completed, and that without mapping, planning, or even trying very hard. It only ended when, deep in the

THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

The village of Thelston holds many attractions for the weary traveller, but there are many dangers too – let's go on a quick guided tour in the AMIGA POWER open-top bus.

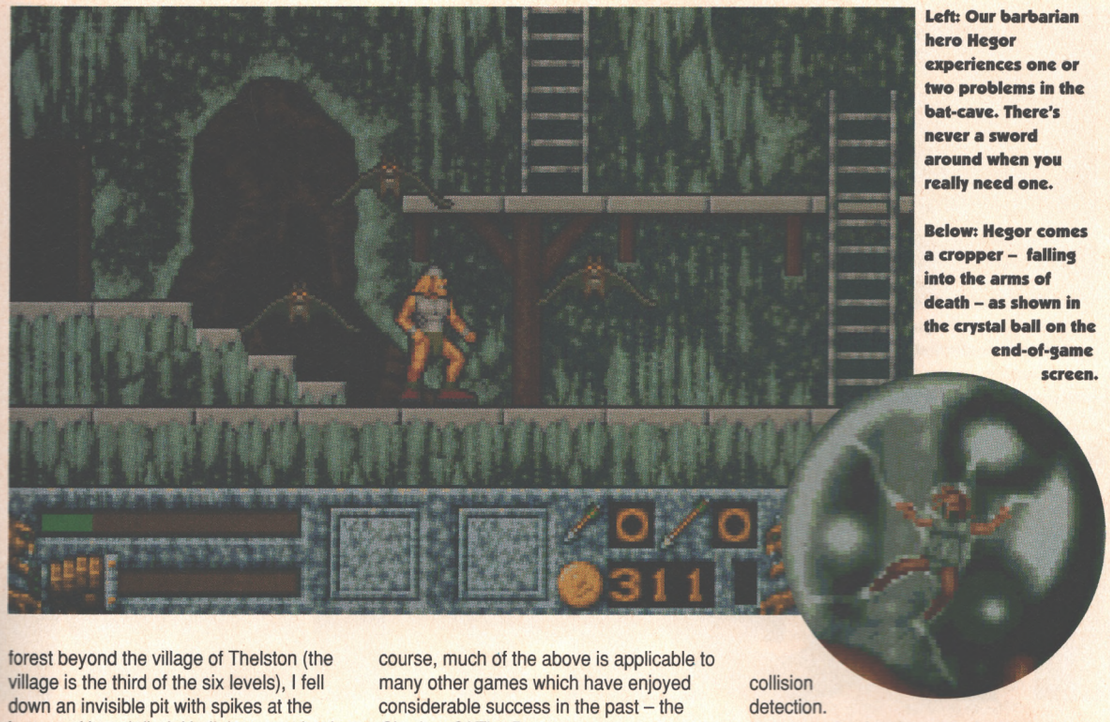


This big double gate looks interesting, but you haven't got time to nose around.



"Excuse me, repulsive old crone, but can you direct me to Swords 'R' Us?"

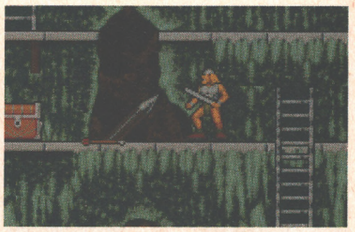
Here we see Hegor about to become part of a barbarian sandwich.



Left: Our barbarian hero Hegor experiences one or two problems in the bat-cave. There's never a sword around when you really need one.

Below: Hegor comes a cropper – falling into the arms of death – as shown in the crystal ball on the end-of-game screen.

You don't get any kind of a clue before plunging into this hidden pit, but it doesn't matter because it's only one of a number of entry points to the second level. Later on in the game the pit will be spiked.



At least you get some sort of warning with this vicious little spike trap.

RIAN II

their very own *Barbarian*. Now he's back, but haven't games moved on since then?

forest beyond the village of Thelston (the village is the third of the six levels), I fell down an invisible pit with spikes at the bottom of it and died. Until that completely unfair and infuriating death (an entire hour's gameplay down the drain thanks to something which was invisible and unavoidable – even more so than the similar traps in *Rick Dangerous* et al – in a game with no save facility, level codes or whatever? Someone at Psygnosis has either a very nasty sense of humour or a shrewd understanding of how quickly people are going to finish this game), old Hegor was in no trouble of any kind, such is the extremely generous energy allowance you start off with and the minimal effect of attacks by the enemy characters. Even the shakiest of players will find making headway in *Barbarian II* presents them with very little difficulty. Of course, much of the above is applicable to many other games which have enjoyed considerable success in the past – the *Shadow Of The Beast* games are the obvious comparison, and fans of those will in all probability glean a fair amount of enjoyment from this. Even given that, though, there are a good few flaws in this game. The worst one is the map system. For a game which relies almost entirely on mapping, the layout is ludicrous – how can it possibly be that, standing at a T-junction with two paths running off in entirely opposite directions, taking either of then results in Hegor ending up in exactly the same place? It's not just occasionally either – it's repeated all the way through the game and it baffles me utterly.

"It has a haphazard, half-finished feel"

Also, aren't we beyond games with a play area which only occupies half of the screen by now? And finally there's the collision detection.

Now I can forgive the game for having two characters overlap without colliding when they're standing at different heights, but the number of times Hegor can swing his weapon right through the middle of an enemy without causing it any harm whatsoever when he's standing right beside him/it is absurd. It gives things a haphazard, half-finished feel which is the last thing we've come to expect from Psygnosis, and sadly it seems to be symptomatic of *Barbarian II*'s all-round total lack of heart.

HEGOR IN THE BACK OF MY CAR

This is a well put-together game, but it's one of the laziest pieces of design I've seen in ages – most Hi-Tec cartoon licences have more to them than this. Psygnosis have kept us waiting a long time for *Barbarian II*, but while they've been hanging about the rest of the software industry has moved on. This is big and quite pretty, but this sort of game design just won't do any more.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

UPPERS It looks good, and there's a generous measure of senseless brutality and fantasy atmosphere.

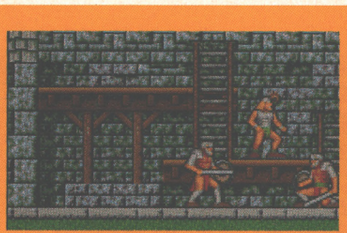
DOWNERS Very repetitive and very shallow in the gameplay stakes – it's just run a bit, chop a bit, jump a bit all the way through. For a game relying so heavily on mapping, the map is senselessly illogical. And invisible bloody danger rears its disgustingly ugly head again too.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Shadow Of The Beast fans will love it (as might *Heroes Of The Lance* fans, at a pinch). It's pretty, there's lots of it, and it'll take you a while to get through to the end (well, it will feel like a long time, anyway), if only because of the lack of any kind of save facility. It bores the spleen off me, though.

68 PERCENT

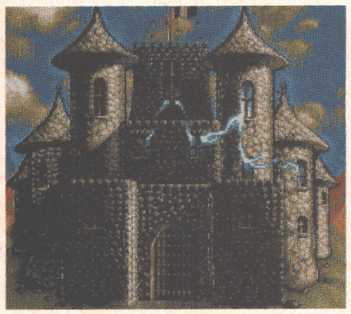
Hegor pops out from a junction, spots a couple of angry soldiers and legs it!



Taking a breather from the action is easy – just stand here and you're invisible!

"Right, that's it, you've been asking for this – kiss my axe!" Hegor gets mean.

At last, the shop. Time to buy an Even Bigger Axe and kill more poor peasants.



The impressive opening sequence. Lightning strikes and the shadow of the FrightKnight strengthens until the Knight consumes the whole screen – spooky stuff!

These cameos of Treguard are to be found periodically on the walls. Clicking on them gives usually provides a clue, from the obvious to the obscure.

Going off the rails in *Knightmare*. Jumping into this railway freight cart near the beginning of the adventure results in a rocky ride. Jump for it!

A hole in the sky? I thought this was *Knightmare*, not the bleedin' Time Bandits. There's got to be some way to get myself up there, but how?

If you're looking for a new, more magical, *Captive*, you're in the right place. If,

KNIGHTM

Game: Knightmare
Publisher: Mindscape
Authors: Tony Crowther; additional design by Tim Child, Jan Thwaites, Chris Crowther; additional graphics by Jan Thwaites, Steve Laney, Steve Thompson; with music by Richard Joseph
Price: £30.99
Release: Out now

Mmmm. Being the resident 'weirdo who likes this sort of thing', it's no surprise to find myself reviewing this sort of thing. Maybe the FRP revolution hasn't quite reached the other members of AMIGA POWER just yet...

And so we come to the *Captive* game that isn't. Written by Tony Crowther (Mr *Captive* himself) and, indeed, using the very same player interface and game structure, the big difference here is with the scenario. Whereas *Captive* was very obviously a cross between *Dungeon Master* and the film Aliens, *Knightmare* purports to be a game based directly on the cult(ish) kid's TV series – I say purports because I've got a couple of very real problems with the way it's been done which I'll get to in a minute. What it *actually* comes across as is *Dungeon Master* without the Aliens aspect – just straight *Dungeon Master*, in fact – the elements of the TV show we *can* find (Treguard and that weird elf kid, two TV characters who make quite a few appearances) tacked on afterwards. Even Mr Crowther admits that he was much more interested in writing a *DM*-style game than trying to stick rigidly to the format of the programme, which makes you wonder why anyone bothered getting the licence in the first place.

"Taken in isolation, *Knightmare* doesn't fare too badly"

So what of the game itself? Well, fans of *Dungeon Master*, *Captive*, *Eye Of The Beholder* et al will have no trouble getting straight into it – the player interface is remarkably similar. Those drawn in by the 'Knightmare' tag (particularly the younger viewers who actually watch the show) might experience one or two problems, however – it'll prove far to complicated for them. Again, I'll get to that a bit later.

SMELLS LIKE TEAM SPIRIT (AGAIN)

What the game basically offers is a first-person (as if viewed through the characters eyes) view of the game world, which is quite simply a bunch of inter-connected squares. Various features (shrubs, walls, rail lines) are placed in each location, and viewed together as a whole, the result is akin to a 3D world. This is pretty neat – monsters can be seen lurking behind trees far off, only to wander around, eventually encountering the player's character(s) and getting into a scrap. The bad thing about this cellular mapping system is that things occasionally come across as a little contrived and blocky. *Knightmare*'s level and quality of graphic detail copes quite well by current standards, though from what I've seen of *Eye Of The Beholder 2* it's soon going be shown up quite badly.

The *Captive* game system doesn't really match up to SSI's *Beholder* system either. Mucking around with objects and combat just feels too clumsy – I'm sure something a little more intuitive could have been sorted out. After all, re-using the *Captive* system was an ideal opportunity to refine it and iron out the problems, and while much has apparently been done, in practice it makes little difference.

Indeed, in many other ways – graphics aside – this seems rather over-reminiscent of *Captive*. Even the map layout of *Knightmare* is similar – the adventure begins outside in the wide open spaces, then (after solving one or two elementary problems) leads into the Dunshelm castle itself. From here on it's off into a land of maze mapping, puzzle solving and combat with hobgoblins and their ilk – who said originality was dead?

If I sound just a little down about the

CAPTIVATED BY THE GAME SYSTEM

Initially daunting, the display isn't too complicated. Here're my fave rave top five display features...

1. **The main view window – this can be switched between the 3D display you see here, and the character statistics display.**
2. **The four character icons – with stats in bar form.**
3. **The movement arrows (including slide left/right).**
4. **The left and right hands of the characters.**
5. **These icons allow the game to be saved/loaded, the characters to rest, the colours and sound altered, and all four player stats shown.**

In case you haven't twigged on yet, this tree creature is in need of a helping hand. Don't just leaf it be, its bark is worse then its bite – only a sap would refuse to help.

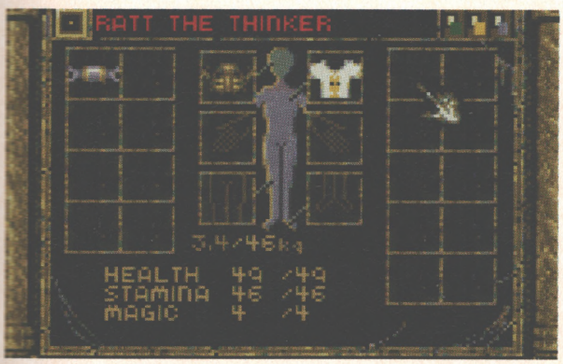
These hob-goblin type creatures are a real pain in the bum. They may look fairly harmless, but until the characters get built up a bit, every battle is a dice with death.

And in case of death the Sprig Of Life & Death comes in handy. Throw a dead character's heart at it, and – kerpow! – do the resurrection shuffle.

See what I mean about those hob-goblins? The two hearts on the floor belong to two of my characters (now deceased). Time to make a run for it.

however, you're a fan of the TV show...

ARE



The character stats screen displays all items worn and carried, and the health, stamina, magic points and encumbrance (weight carried) of the selected character. It's all just too bitty and unhelpful, if you ask me.

whole thing, then it's probably because of one or two complaints.

COMPLAINTS COMING RIGHT UP

One – I've seen all of it (or something remarkably similar) before. Everybody is jumping on the fantasy role playing bandwagon right now, and while this is perfectly healthy providing each release manages to inject new elements into the genre, there's also that cloning danger which has already all but killed the shoot-'em-up (if I see another sideways scrolling one, I think I'll scream). *Knightmare* doesn't really make any significant changes or improvements – just presents it all in a slightly different way – and that's a crime as far as I'm concerned.

Problem number two – the graphics are just too bitty and indistinct. Everything has been given a text look. All well and good, but when there're tiny objects littered around the place, and when everything is painted in the same colour tones, objects just blend into the background. I'd rather have slightly less 'realistic' graphics, and be able to clearly see things. Not a major complaint, but it's a complaint all the same.

Problem number three – it's got almost nothing whatsoever to do with the TV show! What is the point of getting a licence for something when the only connection you're intending to make with the game is a shared fantasy setting? Worse, you're in danger of pitching what turns out to be a fairly hard and involved example of an already fairly hard and involved genre at completely the wrong audience. It scares me to think that an eight-year old fan of the show might fork out £30 on the game – or have £30 forked out for him – when he's not even going to be able to solve the first puzzle.

It's quite clear what a *Knightmare* game should be like – a fun and easy fantasy role player to introduce new and younger players to the genre, perhaps not unlike Gremlin's *Hero Quest* – but this is a model they seem almost perversely determined to avoid here. Such foolishness!

But okay, okay, you guys have read this far, so you're in little danger of buying the game because you don't realise what it is you're getting. Let's judge it on its own merits, as if it were simply a *Captive* sequel, say, and nothing to do with a telly programme at all. Taken in isolation, then, *Knightmare* doesn't fare too badly (if you like that sort of thing, but I do so that's alright). It's pretty damn huge, and the puzzles are paced at just about the right difficulty, and the right intervals – Tony Crowther has said he found *Eye Of The Beholder* too easy, and has made this game a lot trickier to complete.

CHARACTERS (AND LACK OF IT)

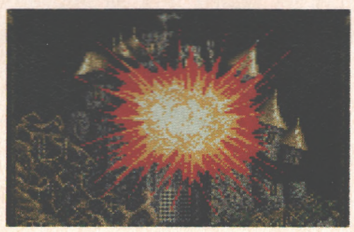
That said though, there's still a slightly fussy control system to contend with, and I've got problems with the characters. Fantasy role-playing games rely on the player identifying with his characters, or at least getting remotely emotionally attached to them. *Knightmare*'s characters seem to be composed of a few dull statistics and very scrappy (and inexplicably tiny) cameos. Here, watching a party of four characters die is a very cold, detached experience (kind of like watching all the Friday 13th flicks in one go) and generally they do little to promote a sense of atmosphere, so important in a game like this.

Which (and why not?) brings me onto the final bee in my bonnet. I resent having characters take damage by walking into walls (acceptable just about, but surely they'd have the sense not to bash their heads against it?) and bushes (mutant man-eating bushes perhaps?). Walk into a bush enough times and you die – what a ridiculous state of affairs. Even throwing a ball against a wall, then catching it, causes damage! If I'm supposed to believe that this hardy band of adventurers can't even catch a ball without getting beaten up by it, what hope of completing the quest, eh? I'm sorry, I know these games are all about the suspension of disbelief, but when a game's as un-user-friendly as this, I find it a little hard to bear.

This is actually quite a good product (despite my torrent of whinges), and anyone with an insatiable appetite for this sort of role playing is unlikely to be disappointed – I know some people who are very excited about the game. The fact remains, however, that it's simply not good enough in a market where SSI and co have already set the standards incredibly high. As Stuart says, "*Knightmare* is *Treasure Island Dizzy*, but without the cute graphics" – make of that sentence (or indeed Stuart) what you will, but at least he's saved me the effort of thinking up a last line for the review...

● ***MARK RAMSHAW***

Fail in your quest (ie get all the characters killed while trying to thwart the evil dude and his FrightKnight), and this castle won't remain quite so serene.



Like some totally heinous thing like this will probably happen. Back to the character creation drawing board. (Nice explosion though).

UPPERS The *Captive* system given a more appropriate fantasy setting. The game is also more compact than *Captive*, albeit with a higher concentration of puzzles. Game-starved, hard core RPG-ers and the like will be in their element.

DOWNERS Not enough thought put into the general concept, rather than the details, basically. It could have looked better, had more atmosphere, had more to do with the TV show, and blown away all the other fantasy games out there, but it hasn't. The idea that sub-12 year-olds might buy it for the TV connection is frightening too. Don't do it kids!

THE BOTTOM LINE

It feels like role-playing by numbers. Complacency is not a pretty thing, and this game doesn't take a single risk or make any strides forward. The role-playing world just doesn't need a game like this, and the Knightmare TV show certainly doesn't.

74 PERCENT

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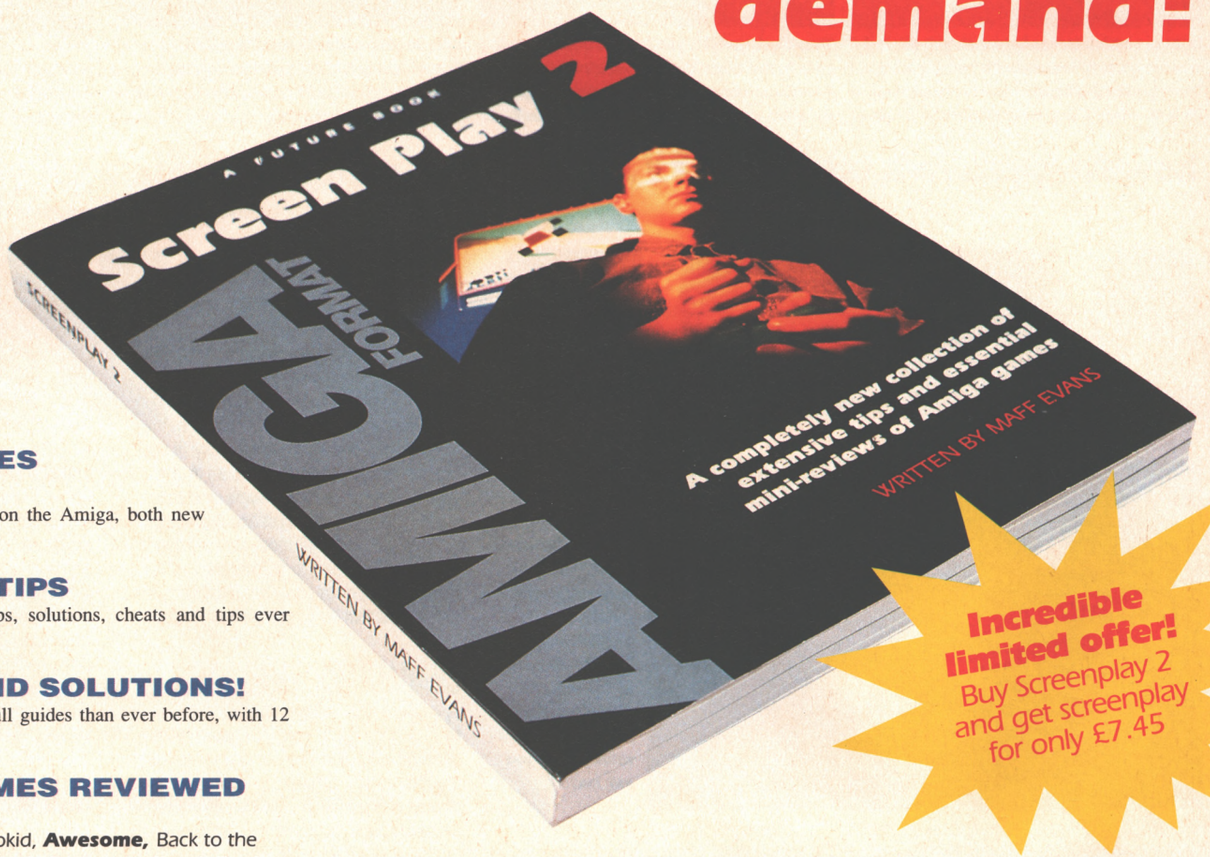

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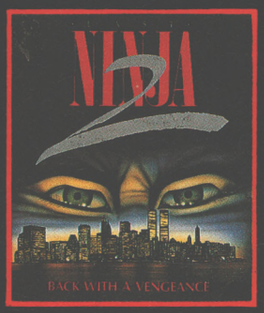

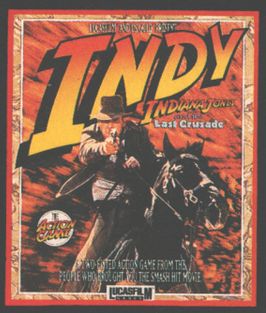

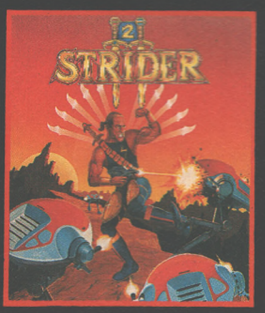

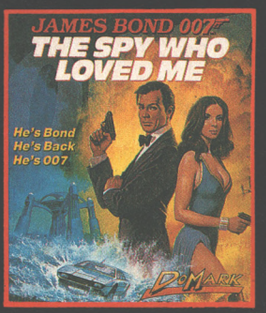

DOMARK

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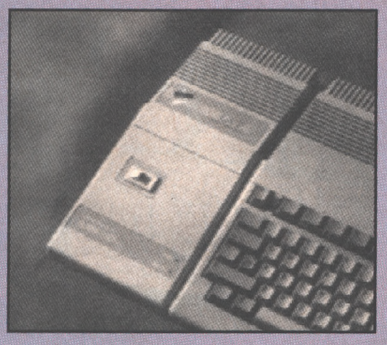

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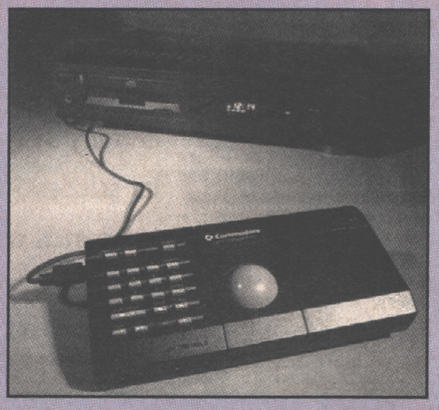

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PRINCE OF PERSIA

Broderbund

Jayant S Jesrani of Wadala in Bombay, India, wrote to congratulate us on our *Prince Of Persia* guide. Smart chap. Jayant also pointed out that on the eighth level, after stepping on the switch for the exit and passing the razor gates, you can't get out of the first barred gate you encounter. At least not by yourself, as the timing is such that the gate closes before you reach it and the switch for opening it is on the opposite side.

This is true. In my haste I forgot to mention that after reaching the barred gate, you should wait for a few seconds until the mouse sent by the Princess appears on the opposite side of the gate and activates the switch to open it.

Jayant added that he'd loved to have sent us a complete map-based solution to us but couldn't simply because he didn't know how to make one, and so he's after information about how to go about it.

Well, Jayant, unfortunately it's not easy. An Action Replay cartridge can sometimes be used to 'grab' the screens in preparation for bolting them together on our Macintosh system. A cheat mode often helps, too. However, not all software is appreciative of the Action Replay. You could always draw your own map – it's time-consuming, I know, but the sender of any quality maps we use will be rewarded.

ATOMINO

(Psygnosis)

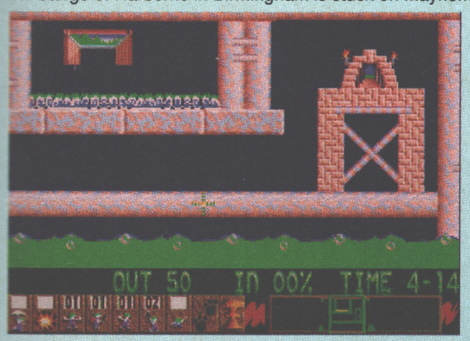
Leonard Jepson of Barnsley in South Yorks is a self-confessed "42-year old brain teaser nut". Psygnosis' *Atomino* is Len's latest love-of-his-life, for which he's helpfully provided the first 10 passwords.

LEVEL	PASSWORD		
10	IDYLL	60	INFERNAL
20	TAURUS	70	FOSSIL
30	NEPTUNE	80	POISON
40	PHOTON	90	SOUP
50	PLANKTON	100	SULPHATE

LEMMINGS

(Psygnosis)

DA Sturge of Harborne in Birmingham is stuck on Mayhem Level 20 with his access code of LIGKJNOOIP (not that that makes any difference). Sadly (very sadly), the intent outweighed the ability of the Good Samaritan in me, and I couldn't see how to complete it either. So, for the benefit of DA, myself and anyone else in the same predicament, here's the level in full. Smart asses should doodle accordingly on this picture of the level (or a bigger diagram of it if there's not enough room) and send the solution to me at the usual address. Ta. In the meantime though, DA, here's a password for Mayhem Level 21: OGANOMEPIY.



CHROME

(Gremlin)

Dave Schlick of Purbrook in Portsmouth has all the codes for *Switchblade II*'s secret hidden game (see Complete Control, AP8, for further details). And here they are...

LEVEL	CODE						
1	START	6	MOUSE	11	SPACE	16	WORLD
2	TRUTH	7	HUMAN	12	GENAM	17	AUDIO
3	JELLY	8	FLOOR	13	APPLE	18	LOGIC
4	STORY	9	PAPER	14	JUICE	19	TITLE
5	CLOUD	10	EARTH	15	CHESS	20	VENUS

COMPLETE control

Gary's been around a bit, apparently. It's said that he's a bit of a gaming gigolo who can coax secrets out of even the most tight-boxed of software. Or failing that, he's made the acquaintance of someone else who can. Tell you what: why not put him to the test and try to catch him out, eh? Note that personal correspondence is out of the question, but any super-sexy COMPLETE solutions we receive and print will be rewarded with an equally super-sexy software prize. Or two, even. The address is G'DAY GAZ!, Complete Control, Amiga Power, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

FINAL FIGHT

(US Gold)

Neil Huddart of Clitheroe in Lancashire is having a bit of trub with "an old fart in a wheelchair with a dart gun, called the Boss". He just can't kill him. "Try harder," says Nick Vincent out of Creative Materials, the team behind the Amiga conversion of *Final Fight*, before adding: "He's got quite a lot of hit points. The best thing to do is to play Hagar in the final sequence. Attack the Boss by jumping on him as if performing a piledriver – you can't actually do it, but the jumping does damage the Boss and helps you avoid the harpoons he shoots at you."

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II

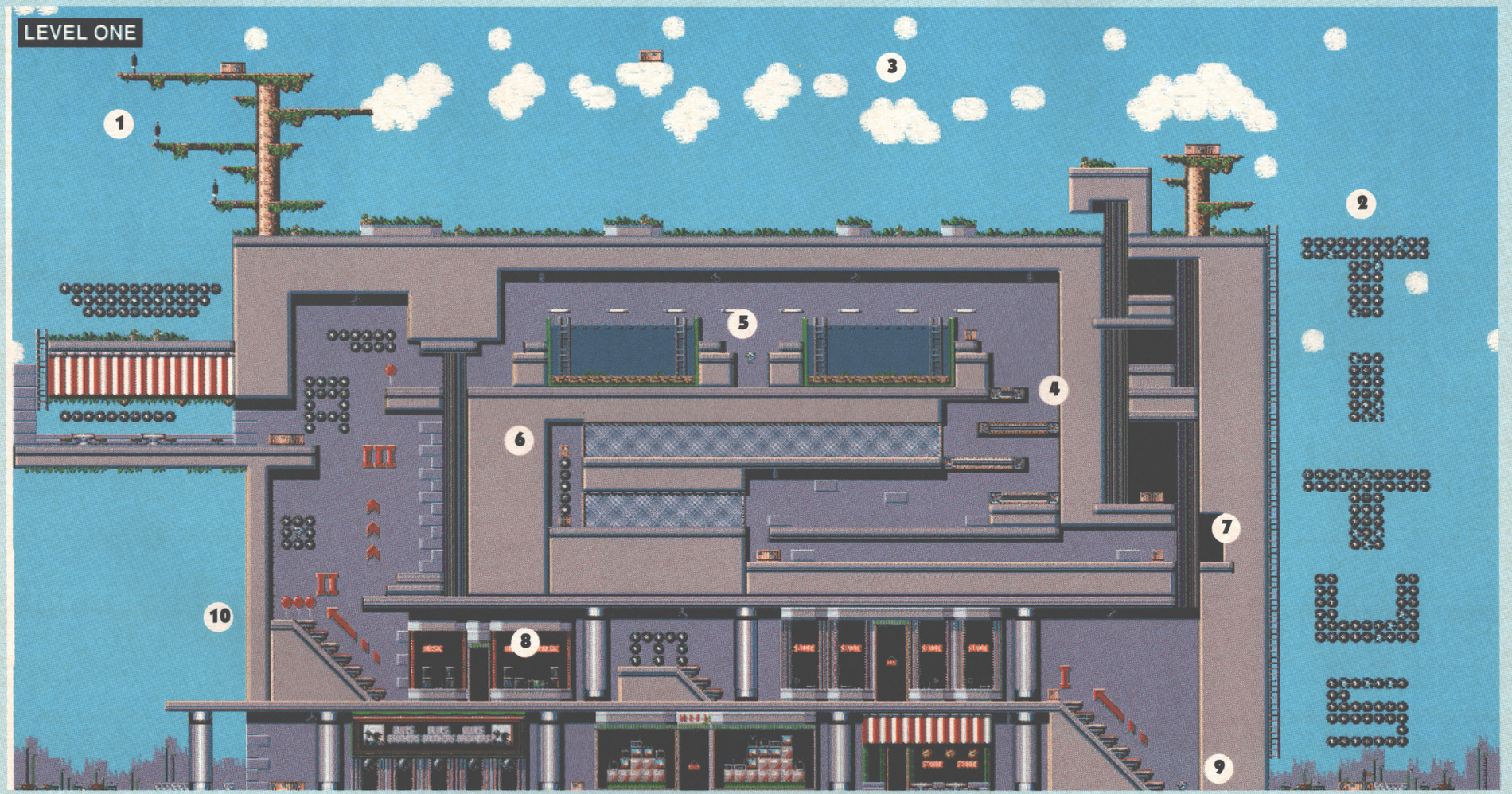
(Gremlin)

Following last month's beginner's tips straight from the horse's mouth, here are the course passwords. Special mention goes to Mark Hudson of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk for providing the two special passwords which escaped the attention of everyone else.

TWILIGHT Night Course	PEA SOUP Fog Course	THE SKID Snow Course
SPEACHES Desert Course	LIVERPOOL Motorway Course	BAGLEYE Marsh Course
BOW Storm Course	DEESIDE Qualify Regardless	TURPENTINE The Timer Sticks On '10'

THE BLUES BROTHERS

Presenting part one of AMIGA POWER's guide to the *Blues* – from soul man Stuart (with a little help from Palace). Part two next issue.



1 The umbrellas hanging around up here are invaluable for crossing the clouds.

2 Float down here and you'll find enough records for an extra life heart – but watch

3 Meteorological shock! These clouds are, rather unusually, almost completely solid.

4 These conveyor belts are no problem –

5 There's nothing mysterious about the question mark icons at all. For example, this one here will always take 20 records away.

6 A teddy bear? What you'll actually find is a

7 The lift shafts can catch out the unwary – be careful you don't miss the lifts!

8 Nip into this shop and you'll find your

9 This icon is the 'dance bonus' one – collect it and have a quick boogie.

10 Balloons provide a handy means of

this one here will always take 20 records away.

2 Float down here and you'll find enough records for an extra life heart – but watch

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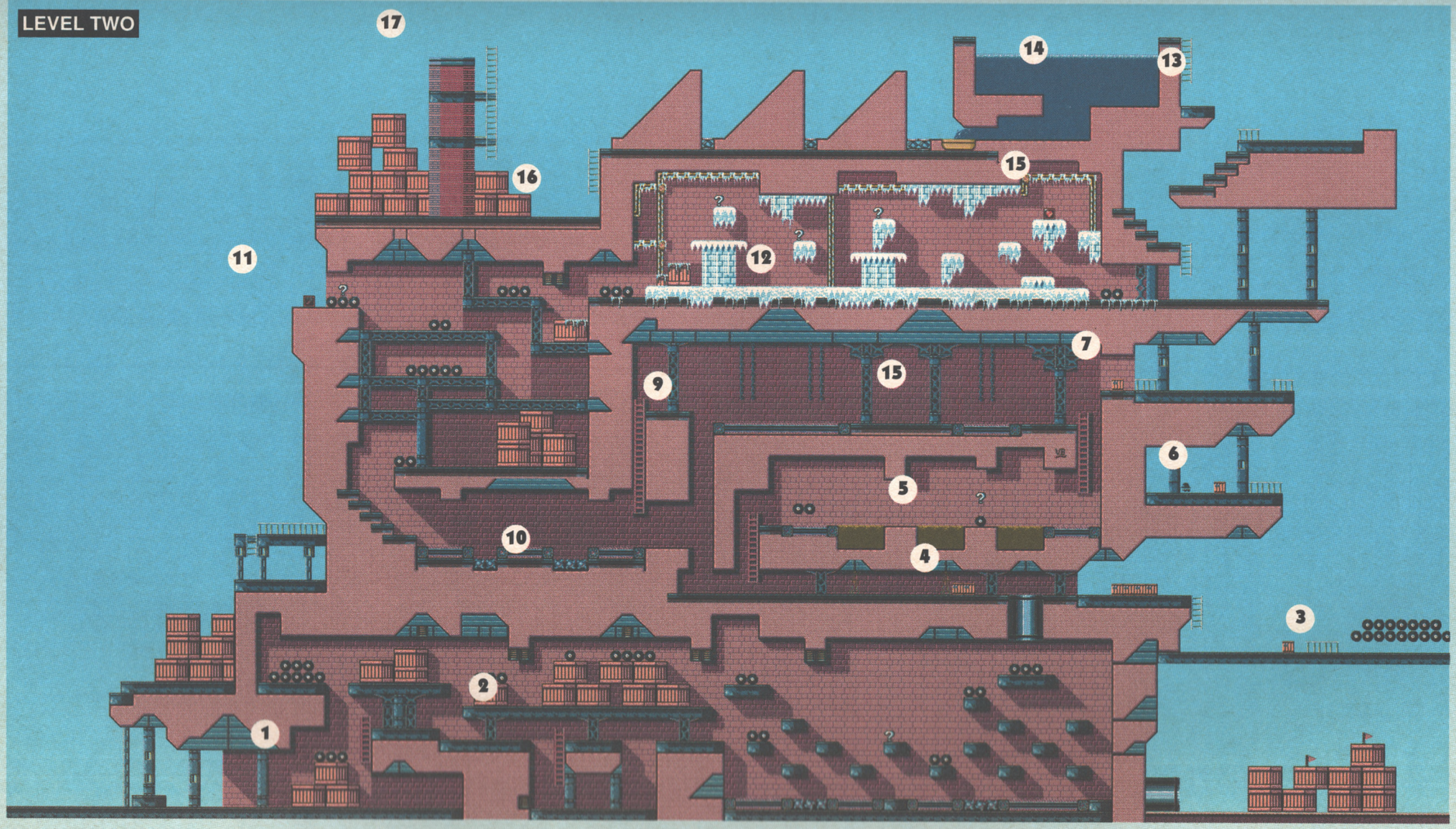


1 Right at the start you'll find an obnoxious kid who'll give you a hard time if you let him. There aren't any crates around, so jump quickly and stay out of trouble.

2 The kid's twin brother is hanging around here, so stay on top of the crates if you don't want to get beaten up.

3 A swift detour across here yields a clutch of free records.

4 Pick up one of the crates here – they won't shield you from the electric death rays, but you're going to need them in a second or two...

5 ...or this workman will reconstruct you with his spanner!

6 One of the question mark icons hanging about above these deadly toxic waste tanks is a dance token, one is a record bonus. Since it's of no importance whatsoever, we'll leave you to find out for yourself which is which.

7 The hat and shades here will give you an extra life, but it's a tricky manouevre to get in safely without getting clobbered by the workman. It's possible though, so have at least a go at it.

8 After climbing the ladder for the second time (if you took the detour for the extra life), collect this crate and head left.

9 Miss this jump at the end of the conveyor belts and you'll have to do the whole section over again. So don't miss it.

10 This bit's harmless if you're careful, but it's incredibly annoying to die here if you've just got past the nasty bit beforehand, so don't get cocky!

11 ...then bound across here and collect this level's objective – your groovy missing microphone.

12 The icy floor here is a real pain, so don't be tempted to go for all the icons unless you're feeling very confident. On the other hand, the extra life heart is worth taking a chance for.

13 Not far to go now. Get to here, dodging the workman to the right, then leg it up the ladder without pausing and take a dip in the pool.

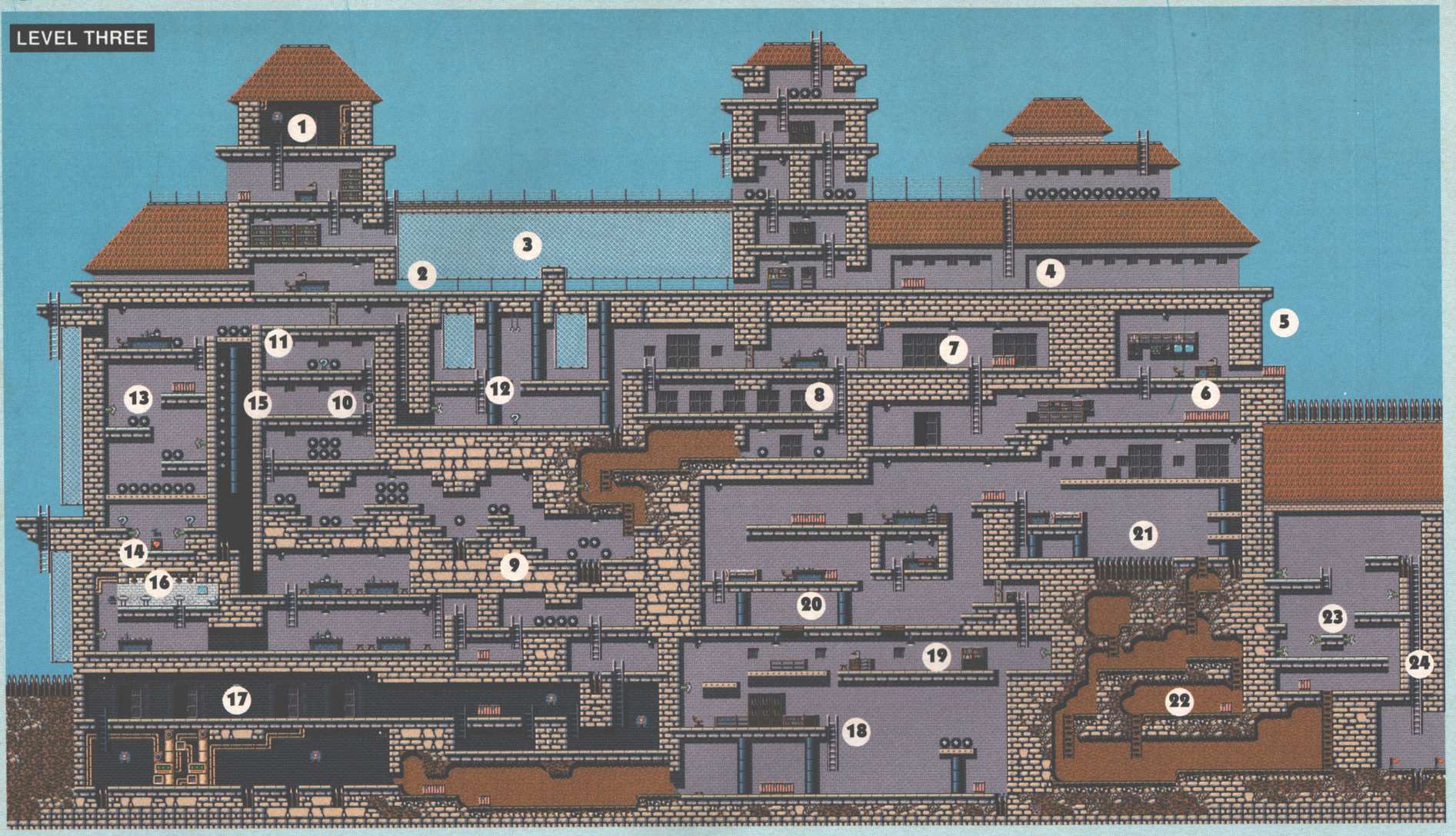
14 What a warehouse is doing with a swimming pool on the roof is anybody's guess. Don't hang around thinking about it, just head straight for the bottom and start bouncing your way across.

15 This bit's awkward. You have to contend with conveyor belts, deadly crushers hanging from the ceiling, and a spanner-toting navvy in the middle. Let him have it with your crate and watch the patterns carefully for the right timing.

16 After the third jump, drop to the bottom of the ladder and immediately be ready for the troublesome foreman. A quick leap clear and...

17 ...up and over – you've just completed Level Two!

LEVEL THREE



1 And here's the start – you've clearly just broken in through the skylight.

2 If you crawl through here, you'll be able to get down the outside wall, but why would you want to?

3 A quick shimmy across this fence will help you avoid the baddie beneath.

4 There's a few mean mutts around here – take a crate if you want, but it's quicker just to run for it.

5 After collecting all the records, drop down here and head left.

6 Grab one of these useful crates as you pass, it'll come in handy in a minute.

7 Climb up here, clobber the guards, and pull the lever to open the door.

8 No, this isn't actually where you want to go at the moment, but you'd better take the detour for now.

9 It's a long way down through the sewer, so don't blow it immediately afterwards on these concealed spikes!

10 Creep carefully up the ladders, biff the baddies...

11 ...and flick the switch, the reason for all this faffing about. Now it's time to make your way carefully back to 8.

12 This is an evil bit. Head across the top platform, drop down and run – DON'T TOUCH THE ICON!

13 Now it gets really horrible – conveyor-belt floors and electric death rays. It's got to be done, though...

14 ...'cos here's what you're after. Unfortunately, now you're going to have to do it all over again as you go back the way you came.

15 Now fall down here, but mind the spikes if you go for the records.

16 If you venture into the showers, be careful – the floor is very slippy...

17 Some of these cells have been carelessly left unattended. Why not pop in and take a quick nose around?

18 Nothing too tricky here, just keep your wits about you.

19 The electric beam across this here corridor is pretty vicious...

20 ...whereas these trapdoors are just plain sneaky.

21 A really big spike pit – but what's it doing in a prison?

22 Down in the sewers again. And what do you usually find in sewers? That's right, rats.

23 Not far to go now, but it's another nasty death-rays-and-sliding-floors affair. Don't blow it now!

24 Nip down this ladder and – you've finished Level Three! Hey Tesco.

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5 After collecting all the records, drop down here and head left.

10 Creep carefully up the ladders, biff the baddies...

17 corridor is pretty vicious... have to do it all over again as you go back the way you came.

24 Nip down this ladder and – you've finished Level Three! Hey Tesco.

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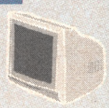

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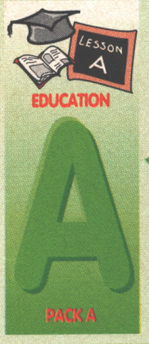

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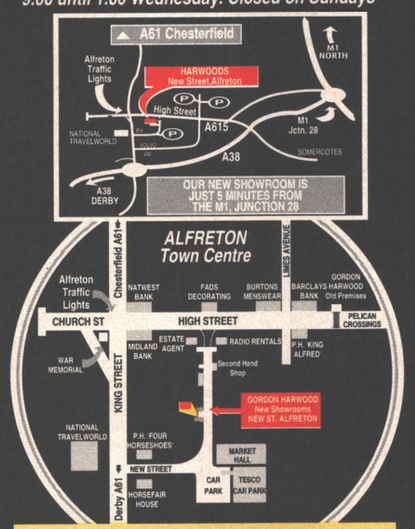

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CRUISE FOR A CORPSE

(Delphine/US Gold)

Stuart Griffiths was the first to send us a complete solution to Delphine's detective dilemma, so top marks him. However, Stuart's incisive mind was obviously occupied elsewhere when he sent us his work, as he completely forgot to include his address, so we can't reward him with this £100 worth of free software just yet...

Don't just stand there, read the AMIGA POWER solution, and solve that mystery!

Note that all the times provided with this solution are not accurate, as the mystery for the most part can be solved in a slightly different order with different times...

One other thing: if you have any other trouble, talk to everyone about *everything* until the clock advances.

Step 1: Take the piece of paper from the floor and smooth it out and read it.

Step 2: Go to the Bar and show the piece of paper to the Barman. Take the mass book he gives you and examine it.

Step 3: Take the letter from the mass book and read it.

Step 4: Move around the ship, getting to know where everything is and speaking to every character about everything.

Step 5: Visit the Father's room and examine his suitcase.

Step 6: Go to the Dining Room and return the mass book to the Father.

Step 7: Proceed to move around the ship asking everyone all about the Father's gambling.

Step 8: Go back to the Dining Room and take the paper from the floor and read it - it's a receipt for a diamond bracelet.

Step 9: Ask everyone about the receipt and the bracelet.

Step 10: Go back to your room. Julio should have vanished, leaving behind a key. Take the key from the floor.

Step 11: Go to the scene of the crime (the Study) and unlock the roll-top desk with the key. Examine the bracelet and the bracelet's clasp. Take it and read the note.

Step 12: Having asked everyone about the note and the bracelet, go to the Rear Hall and talk to Dick about everything you have learned thus far.

Step 13: Go to the Dining Room and open the drawer. Examine and take the wedding invitations. Ask everyone about the invitations.

Step 14: Observe Tom and Rebecca snogging on the upper deck (the time should now be about 10:50).

Step 15: Go to Hector's Room and ask him about everyone and everything.

Step 16: Make sure you have spoken to everyone about Tom's ambition and his plot with Rebecca.

Step 17: Go to the Laundry Room and search the basket. You will find a bathrobe with a necklace in its pocket. Open the necklace and observe the picture.

Step 18: Ask Tom and everyone about the necklace and the picture inside (that of Agnes).

Step 19: Go to Suzanne's cabin and search her wardrobe. Take the prescription from her cosmetic case and read it. Then ask Dick about Agnes.

Step 20: Go to the bar and take the glass and the bottle of whisky.

Step 21: Speak to Suzanne and then serve her a drink. Ask about the prescription and Agnes' death and her will.

Step 22: Ask the father about Agnes and her son. This will result in a flashback sequence.

Step 23: Go to Rebecca's cabin and look through her porthole.

Step 24: Go to Daphne's cabin and search the laundry in her wardrobe.

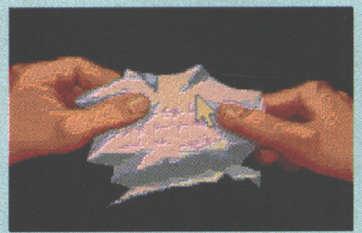
Step 25: Take the envelope and read it. Go to Rebecca's cabin and ask her about everything. Go to the Upper Deck and ask Rose about everything.

Step 26: Go to the Father's Cabin and take the pocketwatch from his wardrobe and examine it.

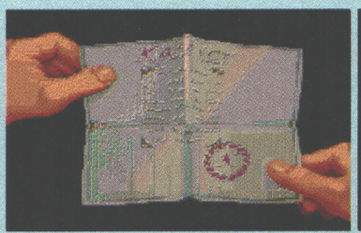
Step 27: Ask Julio (he's outside the Father's cabin) about the pocketwatch. This will result in a flashback (1:20pm).

Step 28: Go to see Hector (he is cleaning up in the Study). Speak to the Father and also to Daphine.

Step 29: Go to the bar and ask Suzanne about Mercades. Then ask everyone about Mercades (this gal gets around!)

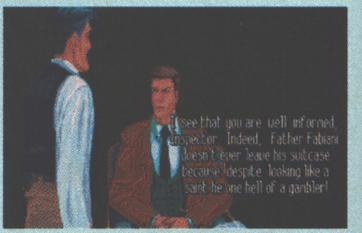


A crumpled letter. What can it say? Let's unfold it and find out, shall we?



Why, it's a signed picture of Matt Bielby. This murderer really is evil! (*Watch it! -Ed*)

It may be impolite, but spying is a surefire dead cert way to learn the facts.



Ha! Nobody expects the Raoul Inquisition. We'll have this mystery solved in no time.

Step 30: go to Daphine's cabin and ask her about everyone. Ask Suzanne about Rose and then Hector about everything.

Step 31: Go to the Upper Deck to find Rose's basket. Search through the basket and read the press clipping about guns (2:00pm).

Step 32: Ask Rose about the press clipping and about Tom's love of guns and about Mercades (2:10pm).

Step 33: Go to Tom's cabin, open his wardrobe and search the sheets. You will find a letter – read it (2:20pm).

Step 34: Go to the Upper Deck to find Suzanne falling into the sea. Point to the left-hand lifebelt and select 'FLING' to save Suzanne. Observe the guard rail.

Step 35: Suzanne will tell you of her suspicions and will give you a letter. She will then send you to her cabin.

Step 36: Go to Suzanne's cabin - it's been searched! (3:10pm)

Step 37: Observe the music box and open it. Then examine it (3:20pm).

Step 38: Go to the Laundry Room and search the pot to find a small key.

"Hey Suzanne? Aren't you dead yet?"

Step 39: Go back to Suzanne's cabin and insert the key into the music box while blocking the figure. A drawer will open with a sheet of paper inside. Take it and read it.

Step 40: Ask Rebecca about the gun advert and Rose's revenge. Then go to speak to Suzanne in the bar. You will be called away to see Rebecca threaten Dick with a gun.

Step 41: Take Daphine's handbag and return it to her. Ask Daphine about Agnes' will for a flashback (4:00pm).

Step 42: Walk to Rebecca's cabin and she will tell you her suspicions. Walk to Daphine's cabin. Walk to Rose's cabin (so you enter the screen with her sitting on the left) then walk to the Father's cabin (the one on the right). The time should be 4:10pm.

Step 43: Talk to Dick about everything.

Step 44: Go to your cabin. Take the note and read it (4:30pm).

Step 45: Go to Hector's cabin and hear his last words before he dies.

Step 46: Walk to the Kitchen. Take the tin opener and then open the hatch and go down. Take the crowbar and use it on the case. Use the opener on a tin. Use the crowbar on the plank to find the missing reel of film.

Step 47: Go to outside Hector's room and take the screwdriver (5:00pm).

Step 48: Go to the Smoking Lounge. Put the reel of film onto the projector. Use the screwdriver on the screws to remove the hood. Press the button. Put the hood back on and operate the projector (5:10pm).

Step 49: Go to the Rear Hall. Daphine will give you a note (5:20pm).

Step 50: Go to Suzanne's cabin and observe her dead body (5:30pm).

Step 51: Go to the Captain's cabin and take Karaboudjan's Book (5:40pm).

Step 52: go to the Study and examine the books. Rearrange them so they read 'INCAL'. A secret door will open (6:00pm).

Step 53: Enter the secret passage and complete the arcade sequence (the left-hand mouse button is duck, the right-hand mouse button is punch).

Step 54: Search the Mafia Man and take the doll (6:20pm).

Step 55: Go to the Smoking Lounge and show the doll to Daphine for a flashback sequence.

Step 56: All the main characters will now be seated in front of you. Point to Dick, sit back and watch the end sequence. Well done – you've successfully solved the mystery and completed the game. ●

"Well, that's another mystery solved."

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(Storm)

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The Rods Of "Sheshanomo", a gift from Dad.

Rainbow Shoes. Given by the elder.

Fight, using the Rod and the Shoes!

Help!!!

Mom is kidnapped by a monster.

Mom is taken atop the "Maboots".

Here it is – your complete guide to Storm's wand-erful conversion of the sickly sweet coin-op *Rodland*! Make sure you're sitting comfortably, because here comes everything you could possibly want to know about the game, courtesy of the man behind the code, Ronald Pieket Weeserik...

THE GALS

What a pair of little crackers, eh? For all their My Little Pony-style sweetness and light though, Tam and Rit aren't the best advert for Fine Quality Fairies From Around The World. They can't jump or fly for a start, and their skills with magic would be nothing without the Rods Of Sheshanomo and their Rainbow Shoes. (Kinda fortunate they have both, really).

TAM

Still to really shake that girl-next-door image, Tam's got a long way to go to catch up with Rit in the 'getting it on with the guys' stakes. You can't deny she wields a wicked wand though...

RIT

With her long blonde hair and 'go to bed' eyes, Rit is AMIGA POWER's fave babe of the two. And she's right riotous with a rod, too. (Oh, alright then, let's face it – they're both exactly the same).

BAD CREATURES

Maybe Tam and Rit will wake up and it will have all been but a bad dream. Their mom *hasn't* been kidnapped by a monster, and their former friends *haven't* really become their enemies. Get a life. These gals are in big-time trubs, that's for sure.

Of course, you can't talk to this sort. The only way to make then see sense is to knock it into them. A spell in the army would do the trick. So would three swift smacks against the floor for that matter, and that's more convenient. Tam and Rit are awarded 50 points each time they bash a Bad Creature on the floor.

Watch out when the tables are turned and Tam or Rit is bumped off by a Bad Creature though – it jumps for joy. And remember – Bad Creatures moving down ladders can't hurt Tam or Rit until they are on the same level.

Avoiding Spuds is easy when you know how – even when there are no ladders around.

SPUDS

First Appearance: Scene 1.
The Spuds are relatively harmless at first, but they soon learn how to split into two and do so with every appearance from Scene 10 onwards. Kill the Spuds quickly before too many to cope with are produced!

When chased by a Spud and there are no ladders nearby, simply build a ladder, climb two-thirds of the way up it and wait for the enemy to pass before falling off to one side. Watch out though – Spuds can climb ladders!

SHARKS

First Appearance: Scene 3.
Keep an eye out for these fishy fiends – they throw deadly tears in an arc down the screen. A shark will stop moving before it cries, so keep your eyes open!

CORNCOBS

First Appearance: Scene 3.
One of the least dangerous adversaries Tam and Rit encounter, the CornCob's only noticeable trait is its tendency to split open from time to time.

NESSIES

First Appearance: Scene 7.
Only home in on Tam and Rit when on the same level. Build a ladder and step up a rung to leave the Nessies wandering around aimlessly.

BUNNIES

First Appearance: Scene 11.
The fluffy freaks are more or less harmless – until they eat a carrot and go into turbo mode, that is!

POLYMORPHS

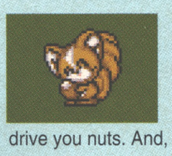
First Appearance: Scene 11.
They have the silliest attack weapon ever seen – they stick out their long tongues. Like the Nessies, Polymorphs can only see Tam and Rit when they are on the same level. As soon as you see one preparing for an attack, quickly build a ladder and climb it.

WASPS

First Appearance: Scene 15.
These are the only type of Bad Creature that can fly, which makes them tricky to dodge or capture. And, of course, their stings are deadly.

SQUARE BLOBS

First Appearance: Scene 16.
Keep an eye on them. They usually attack (shooting blue gob) when directly beneath Tam or Rit. Otherwise they're pretty dense.



BUSHIES

First Appearance: Scene 16.
These killer squirrels are manic enough to drive you nuts. And, erm, that's it really.

CHICKS

First Appearance: Scene 21.
These chicks of the feathered variety don't really have much going for them. (Let's hope they get caught and eaten for Christmas, eh?)

LOBSTERS

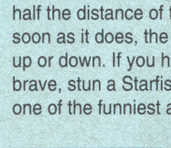
First Appearance: Scene 21.
They only attack from short range but without much warning. When one is near, it's safest to assume it will pinch you, so quickly climb up a ladder to avoid it.

CHIMPS

First Appearance: Scene 26.
These cheeky monkeys do do do the Funky Gibbon, but little else to freak you out. They're not so dangerous.

STARFISH

First Appearance: Scene 26.
The pointy pests from Down Under often stop to throw a boomerang at Tam or Rit. The boomerang travels approximately half the distance of the screen, and as soon as it does, the only escape is usually up or down. If you happen to be feeling brave, stun a Starfish with your wand for one of the funniest animations in *Rodland*.



KABURAS

First Appearance: Scene 1.
Collect all the flowers on a screen and the Bad Creatures turn into these red Kaburas. In this state, the Bad Creatures are at their most stupid and vulnerable. They also hold a valuable letter towards the Bonus Game.

BLUE MEANIES
First Appearance: Scene 1.
The Blue Meanies are so-called because they are blue and mean. They only appear when Tam and Rit hang around on one Scene for too long – any Bad Creatures remaining turn into Blue Meanies. The time they take to appear varies from Scene to Scene.

FLOWER POWER
Remember: try not to kill all the Bad Creatures on a screen until all the flowers have been collected – those Bad Creatures that are left turn into Kaburas which hold valuable 'EXTRA' letters.

WEAPONS
Every Bad Creature killed releases a Weapon on its demise. The Weapons stay on screen until they are collected or the Scene is completed. One hundred points are given for each Weapon picked up, though it's not always advisable to actually collect them.

There are two types of Weapon: Standard and Special. The way it all works is this – out of all the creatures in a Scene, only one will leave a Special Weapon when it dies. The Weapons available on each screen are given (if no distinct source is provided, all the Bad Creatures on that screen are of the same type).

MISSILE
A Standard Weapon. A missile is launched in the direction Tam or Rit walk into it. When a missile is launched it travels horizontally until it hits a Bad Creature or the side of the screen. The missile can kill only one Bad Creature.

SUPER
The second Standard Weapon. The Super bounces until it hits a Bad Creature or the edge of the screen.

BOMB
This is more like it. The bomb creates a large explosion which kills any nearby Bad Creatures stone dead.

REVEL
The Revel splits into four individual bouncy balls which kill Bad Creatures.

ICE
Ice produces a spray of deadly ice crystals. Not much else to say really.

FLAME
The programmers' favourite. When the Flame is collected, Tam and Rit are given an automatic feisty flame thrower, but it only lasts for around 10 seconds.

HYPER
When the Hyper is activated it creates two shock waves that kill all Bad Creatures either side of it. Ensure that all the Bad Creatures are in range for maximum bonus points.

PORTALS
The Portals first appear on Scene 17. When using one, make sure that the destination is clear of Bad Creatures.

BALLOONS
Burst them for 50 points each.

SPIKY BALLS
They don't appear very often but are quite deadly. You'll need to keep their simple movement in mind when planning yourself a suitable escape route!

THE BOSSES
A bonus of 10,000 points is given for each Boss character killed.

THE CROCODILES
Appear between Scenes 10 and 11. The safest place to be is on the ground level. Don't climb up to the Crocodiles – they come to you, and when they do, be prepared to give them a jolt with your magic wand. Mind your back – a super-fast twirl and zap may be required to survive the attacks of the Baby Crocs!

The remaining two Crocodiles double their attack rate. Being caught in the middle of these two hyperactive reptiles is not recommended, so it's a good idea to kill all the Crocodiles on one side first before taking on the other side. It takes nine hits to kill a Crocodile.

THE WHALE
Appears between Scenes 20 and 21. The Whale rises and falls and gushes five Baby Whales from its spout. The Whale's only weak spot is its eye, which means occasionally building ladders to get some hits in. Bear in mind that Baby Whales don't climb ladders, so you are (almost) safe up one. Well, you *would* be if only you had an umbrella... It takes 20 hits to kill the Whale.

THE ELEPHANT
Appears between Scenes 30 and 31. An elephant on a trapeze? Only the Japanese can think up these things! Don't use the platforms – they are dangerous places. The Elephant spits out Baby Elephants, then it comes to a full stop in mid-air. This is a warning sign to move out of the way or be sat on. Zap the Elephant when it's on the ground. It will take you 30 hits to kill the Elephant.

THE BULL
PHASE ONE

When this bouncy character bounces to the left, walk right and vice versa. Turn around just before it hits the ground, and get a shot in whenever it touches the floor. It takes you 15 hits to destroy this incarnation of the Bull.

PHASE TWO

In this form, the Bull dives as soon as it is directly above Tam or Rit. Stay on the left-hand side of the screen but away from the edge. When the bull comes down, walk to the left. It's possible to zap the Bull as it moves along the floor. It takes eight hits to destroy this incarnation of the Bull.

PHASE THREE
Don't bother climbing ladders. Wait until the Bull materialises at ground level. Watch out also for the Baby Bulls it spits out. Walk straight in there while it flashes and let rip – you can walk into the flashing incarnation. It takes 15 hits to destroy this incarnation of the Bull.

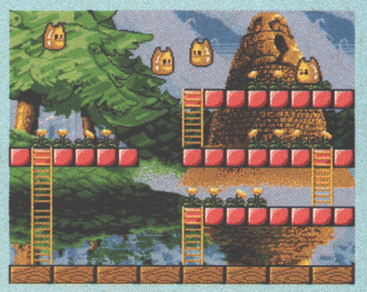
PHASE FOUR

Hyper-fast reflexes are the order of the day here – let it have it when it first appears and flashes. It's possible to walk in front of the Bull, but be careful not to get stamped on by its left foot. Beware of flames and falling rocks. It'll take you 40 hits to kill the Bull, free your Mom and complete *Rodland*. Hurrah!

SCENE 1

3 Missiles
1 Bomb

SCENE 2



3 Missiles
1 Bomb

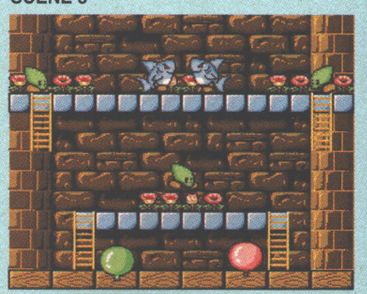
SCENE 3

3 Supers (2 x CornCobs, 1 x Shark)
1 Bomb (1 x Shark)

SCENE 4

3 Supers
1 Hyper
Beware that when there's only one Bad Creature remaining – it goes into dangerous turbo mode!

SCENE 5

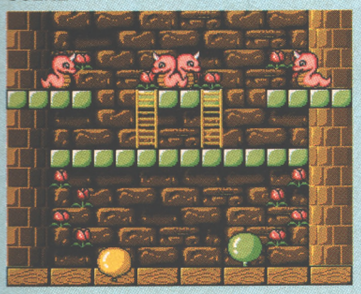


4 Missiles (3 x CornCobs, 1 x Shark)
1 Bomb (1 x Shark)
The only way to reach the top platform is by hitching a ride on the balloons – but wait until the two sharks have come down first. Remember that the Bad Creatures can use the balloons too.

SCENE 6
4 Missiles (3 x CornCobs, 1 x Shark)
1 Revel (1 x Shark)
You may find yourself chased up a ladder just as another Bad Creature has started to come down. Don't panic. Build a short ladder alongside the long one and climb to

the top. Now wait for the Bad Creature to pass and step back to the long ladder.

SCENE 7



2 Missiles
1 Super
1 Hyper

SCENE 8
4 Supers
1 Bomb
Climb up to the two small platforms in the centre of the screen, then build a ladder to the top platform but do not climb it. Fall to the small platform at the bottom and wait until all three CornCobs have fallen down too. Now it is safe to climb to the top and collect all the flowers there.

At the top, walk to the left-hand end of the platform and build a ladder down. Climb down the ladder and hang off it, adjacent to the side platform. From this position it's safe to catch the CornCob and throw it off the platform. Collect the flowers and repeat the procedure on the right-hand side of the screen.

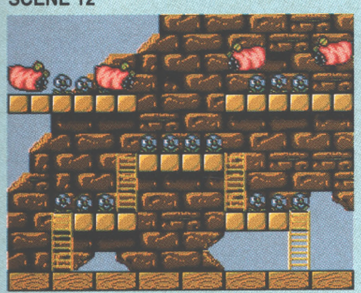
The Bad Creatures will now turn into red Kaburas. Now here comes the tricky bit – how to land on the floor without losing a life. Climb down to the lowest platform and wait until the Kaburas are walking from the centre and facing away. Fall to the free area and blast the Bad Creatures from behind. You should be able to collect all five letters from here.

SCENE 9
5 Supers
1 Bomb

SCENE 10
Supers
Bombs

SCENE 11
2 Supers (2 x Bunnies)
1 Revel (1 x Bunny)
2 Missiles (1 x Bunny, 1 x Polymorph),

SCENE 12

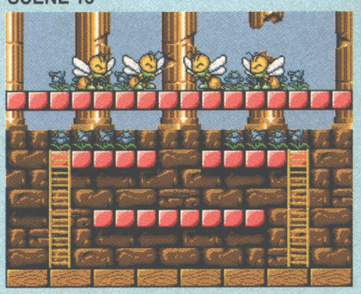


1 Super
2 Missiles
1 Ice

SCENE 13
1 Revel (1 x Polymorph)
4 Supers (2 x Polymorph, 2 x Bunnies)

SCENE 14
3 Missiles (1 x Bunny, 2 x Polymorphs)
2 Supers (1 x Bunny, 1 x Polymorph)
1 Bomb (1 x Bunny)

SCENE 15



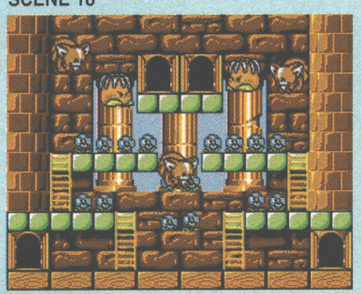
1 Revel
2 Missiles
1 Super

Insect attack! Remember, though – red Kaburas have no wings.

SCENE 16
3 Missiles (2 x Bushies, 1 x Square Blob)
1 Bomb (1 x Bushy)

SCENE 17
4 Supers
1 Flame

SCENE 18



1 Revel (1 x Bushy)
4 Supers (2 x Square Blobs, 2 x Bushies)

SCENE 19
5 Missiles (2 x Square Blobs, 3 x Nessies)
1 Bomb (1 x Square Blob)

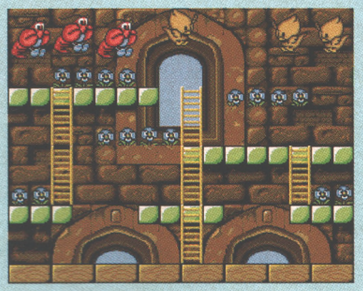
SCENE 20
6 Missiles
1 Ice
More Wasps! Don't bother with the Bonus Game – just get out of here quick!

SCENE 21
4 Supers (4 x Chicks)
1 Revel (1 x Lobster)

SCENE 22
3 Missiles
1 Flame

SCENE 23
5 Missiles (2 x Chicks, 3 x Lobsters)
1 Bomb (1 x Lobster)

SCENE 24
5 Supers (3 x Chicks, 2 x Lobsters)
1 Revel (1 x Lobster)



SCENE 25
5 Supers
1 Revel

SCENE 26
4 Missiles (2 x Chimps, 2 x Starfish)
1 Hyper (1 x Chimp)

SCENE 27
4 Missiles
1 Hyper

SCENE 28
4 Supers (1 x Chimp, 3 x Starfish)
1 Revel (1 x Chimp)

SCENE 29
2 Supers (1 x Starfish, 1 x Chimp)
3 Missiles (2 x Starfish, 1 x Chimp)
1 Bomb (1 x Starfish)

SCENE 30
5 Supers
1 Revel

SCENE 31
Missiles
Supers
Revel
The Portals here are not a safe means of travel as they are guarded by Spiky Balls.

SCENE 32
5 Missiles
1 Flame

SCENE 33
3 Supers (3 x Nessy)
1 Revel (1 x Spud)

SCENE 34

Hyper
Super
Missile

SCENE 35
4 Missiles
1 Hyper

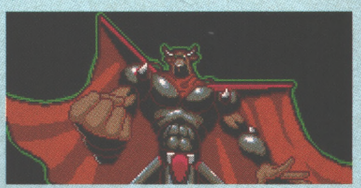
SCENE 36
Supers
Hyper
Don't knock a Special Weapon into the block in the centre.

SCENE 37
4 Missiles
1 Flame
Climb across to the safe side of the pillar – the Bad Creatures can still be happily zapped from over there.

SCENE 38
1 Revel
4 Missiles
If only Tam and Rit had wings (like proper fairies)... Oh well. The Square Blobs are very active in this Scene.

SCENE 39
Hyper
Supers
Some Spuds get stuck in the boxes on either side of the screen, so take the opportunity to zap them through the wall. Try to get all the Spuds on same level when Hyper is available and use it to wipe out the whole lot of 'em.

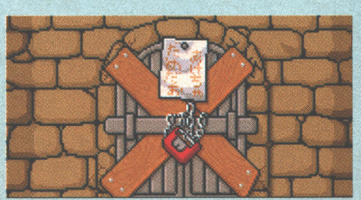
SCENE 40
Revel Galore!



This is as far as you will get. You must first defeat me if you want to save your Mom.

Mom!

Tam, Rit, Thank you!



And the Demon King was locked away.

THE CHEAT MODE
Lazy players can always use the cheat mode to progress... Begin play and pause the action. Press the 'HELP' key five times (no more, no less) and 'unpause' to resume play with the cheat mode active. Tam and Rit will now have unlimited lives, and pressing the SPACE BAR will skip the current Scene. ●

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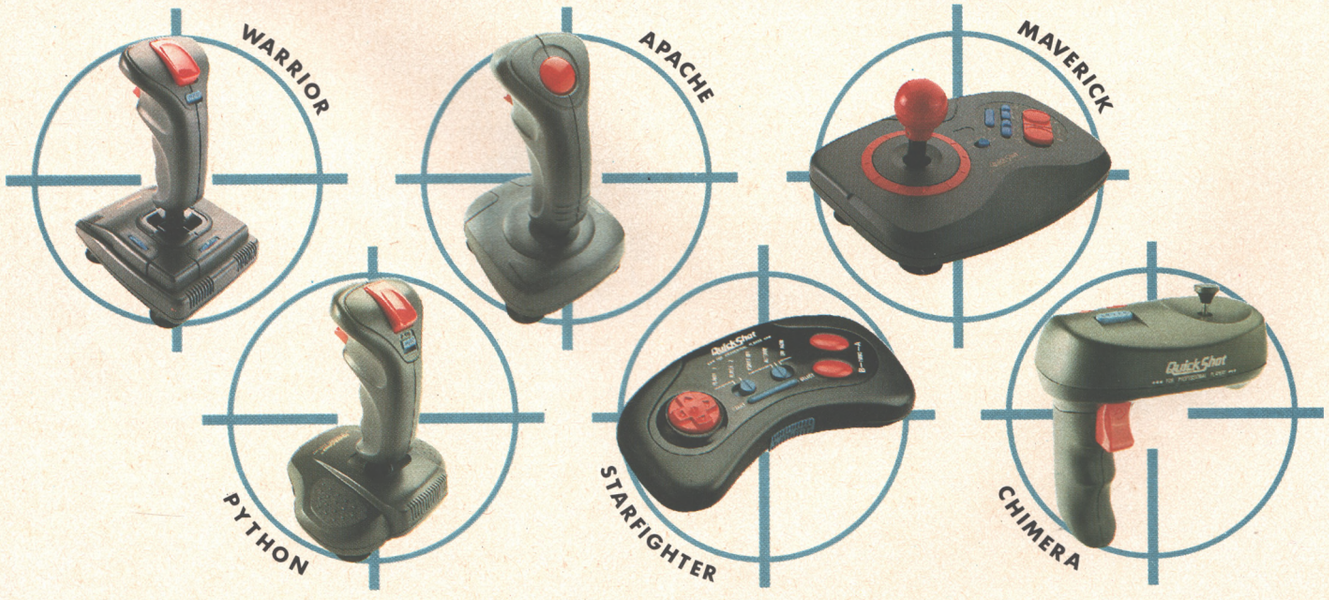

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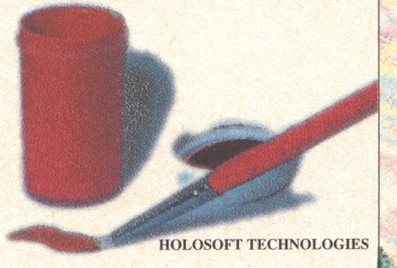

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MAGIC MYSTER

Dark Sun – one of TSR's new D&D-style game worlds. More science fictiony, it could eventually make it to computers.

Role-playing has always had a cliquey, cultish reputation. Or at least, it used to – now, it's spreading, and the computer game is taking over as the primary way for fantasy-heads to get their kicks. Mark Ramshaw examines the rise of fantasy role playing and asks anybody who'll listen, "Where do we go from here?" Welcome to the AMIGA POWER flight of fantasy...

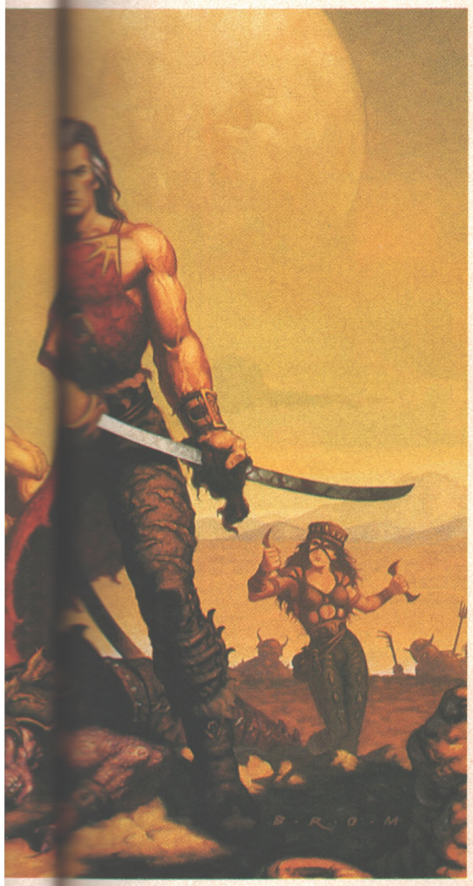
Gary Gygax is the man credited with the birth of the Dungeons & Dragons phenomenon. From humble beginnings the D&D concept has mutated into wargames, the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons system, countless guides, manuals and scenarios, and even a cartoon series. (Check out the mini-interview with Thomas McLaughlin of D&D producers TSR).

All pretty remarkable when many people still wonder what the hell Dungeons & Dragons is all about anyway. The answer's simple, of course – it's fantasy. It involves taking on the role of a hero, and playing through imaginary situations, solving puzzles, using dice to fight monsters, and co-operating with other players and 'non-player characters' – a sort of organised way of letting your imagination run riot. (Want to know more? Check out the 'A Typical Game Of Dungeons & Dragons' box on the right).

At its best it's an interactive book. Something like taking part in an exciting radio script which just happens to be written on the spot. At its worst it's a childish way of insulting 'friends' and influencing people (but I'm not about to go into that...) It's the spontaneous, keeping-your-wits-about-you aspect which appeals to the brain, and the fantasy-escapist aspect which appeals to the kid in everyone. Put the two together and the combination is addictive in the extreme.

What's the problem, then? Well, it's all rather hard to get your head around without actually having played it, I guess. The lack of a board offers no focus for the lazier games player (lead miniatures can

AND Y TOUR



be used, but these are far from essential), while the flexibility of the rules confuses. One participant takes the role of the 'Dungeon Master', and in doing so takes charge of the whole game, guiding the players through the game, describing the environment, and playing the role of all non-player characters and monsters. This might seem like a bit of a thankless task, sort of like refereeing a football match rather than playing in it, and despite the compensatory feeling of power a DM gets you could be right...

Which is exactly where computers come in. Why take on the huge task of playing Dungeon Master when – hey! – a computer could do the job for you? And – while we're at it – why miss out on fantasy role playing when you don't have a whole gang around to join in? Computers make solo adventures possible too. Makes sense to me...

The first breed of computer FRP (fantasy role players) concentrated on the fantasy rather more than the role playing aspect of D&D. Probably the first to appear was one developed on mainframes known simply as *Adventure*. Later released on home computers under the title *Colossal Caves*, this text only adventure combined clever plotting, obscure puzzles, lush chunks of descriptive text, and a pretty clever parser. Still regarded as one of the better adventures, it spawned a whole generation of computer games which are still going strong today. Check out Virgin's *Wonderland* for what's currently being done with text-based games – it's surprising how little progress has been made.

Back with true FRPs though, it was the Sinclair Spectrum which really showcased the first successful role playing games. Long forgotten titles such as *The Oracle's Cave*, *Swords And Sorcery*, *Avalon*, *Dragontorc*, *Fairlight* (one of →

A TYPICAL GAME OF DUNGEONS & DRAGONS...

Before your first game of D&D, the first thing to do is to create a character. This is done by selecting a character race and class (ie human fighter, dwarven magician) and rolling up a set of statistics using the famous D&D dice (these include four-sided, six-sided, eight, ten, twelve and even twenty sided die!). These statistics cover strength, intelligence, dexterity, wisdom, charisma, height, appearance, special abilities and the like. Depending on the race and class chosen there may also be modifiers to adjust the scores rolled, so a male human, for example, is likely to be stronger than a female halfling, but the halfling may make a better thief. Once the basic character, equipment, and a few background details have been sorted out, it's then into the game proper.

It's at this point that the Dungeon Master will either have bought a ready made adventure or devised one. An adventure consists of a map, with text references to each room, plus monsters and traps placed around the place. The whole game really hangs on how well devised the adventure is. If it's just too boring, too easy, or too hard then the players will soon lose interest.

From here on, the players take on the role of the characters, instructing the DM that they wish to move, manipulate items, fight, cast spells and say things. The Dungeon Master will continue to update their positions within the game, giving details of surroundings and consequences of actions. Typical (ie clichéd) problems include mirrors which turn out to be dopplegangers (monsters which can assume the form of whoever they see), treasure chests which are placed on trap doors, and so on. This problem solving aspect is where the first computer adventures took their inspiration, while the computer games which are often referred to as FRPs usually concentrate more on the fighting aspect.

Fighting is very much dice-based in D&D. The sign of a good DM is one who can make up for this number-based system with imagination and good use of English. It's the equivalent to writing a fantasy book on the spot, trying to provide interesting blow by blow accounts of fights while still calculating hits and damage by rolling dice and modifying these rolls in the context of a character's statistics. Add to this the fact that the Dungeon Master must also take on the role of whatever enemies the players are fighting, and you can see why having the computer deal with all this is a good idea.

Characters who successfully retrieve all the treasure, kill all the monsters, save the princess or whatever, AND get back out alive, can then be stored away again for further adventures. This opens up the possibility of improving the character statistics as experience points increase. And, of course, there's all that treasure to spend on supplies, fun and luxuries.

One of the best things about D&D though is the element of surprise (and it's this aspect which frequently gets lost along the way on conversion to computer). If, for instance, the players opt to naff off down the local (but imaginary) inn for a quick game of poker, then the DM can whip out a set of cards and actually play the game. At the end of the day, in fact, the DM can entirely re-define the rules – and in theory the players shouldn't even notice! The descriptions they get from him are their only link into the fantasy world, and whatever number sorting and quick thinking the DM is doing, the end result which the players get should be the same – quick, exciting and atmospheric.

If you possibly can, try to get yourself in a game of 'real' D&D soon. Although initially you may feel a little silly, you'll soon find yourself immersed in a very strange, and utterly compulsive alternate reality – and even if you don't feel compelled to take it up, it'll put a whole (and increasingly important) genre of computer games into real context.

This new board-based, easy-to-play Dungeon & Dragons game set is just one easy way to get into fantasy gaming.

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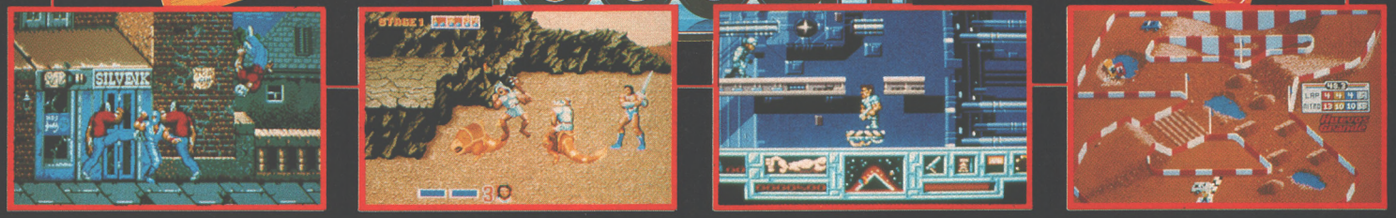

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the first to take the 3D isometric approach), *Tir Na Nog* and the sensational *Heavy On The Magick* helped shape the genre. Look back at these relics of yesteryear – and you can, some occasionally crop up on Your Sinclair cover tapes – and it's easy to see the roots of this year's classics.

At around the same time the C64 was being graced with *Wizardry* (another isometric 3D game from the makers of *Fairlight*, this one concentrating more on the spell-casting aspect of things), while the Apple and IBM machines provided a couple of ever-growing cults – *Ultima*, and another (unrelated) game called *Wizardry* (this one originating in America). The *Ultima* series has gone from strength, offering perhaps the closest thing to Dungeons & Dragons on a computer – more on it later – while *Wizardry* has been similarly successful. Utilising the now familiar 3D maze and party of six or so characters, the series is now up to number six, though none have yet appeared on the Amiga.

"D&D is the equivalent of writing a book on the spot"

HARDCORE KICKS WITHOUT THE PICS

Over in the UK things really took off with an innocent-looking title by one Mike Singleton. *Lords Of Midnight* is still used as a reference point for new Singleton games (*Midwinters 1* and *2*, which use the same game structure but a decidedly non-fantasy setting), but the original is still the best. This is probably down to its simpler, more strategy-based roots. Any older gamesplayers who used to sit round a Spectrum with a bunch of mates will understand the influence this game had – it was *Lords Of Midnight* that started to make the fantasy concept sexy to British games players.

The real D&D system was still unknown to most, though. The subsequent spate of fantasy games, all invariably using atrocious graphics and hardcore jargon, did nothing to further the cause of FRP – it was only with the arrival of the Amiga that things got moving again, but only just. *Faery Tale*, one of the first ever Amiga releases, seemed light years ahead of the Spectrum scene, but behind the dazzling graphics (well, they dazzled quite a few years ago) lay not very much at all. And then one game changed everything.

THE FRP BREAKS ON THROUGH

Dungeon Master combined commercial software sensibilities (good graphics, smart presentation, hype) with a brilliantly designed slice of D&D. Taking its cue from *Wizardry* (the American version), it presented a 3D first-person view of an enclosed maze populated with monsters to bash, spells to collect and cast, and some damn devious puzzles to solve. It sold by the bucket-load and set the pretty high standards for the competition.

Very little could compete with *Dungeon Master*, the only other games of note being the continuing adventures of the *Ultima* series (which were only just getting converted on to the Amiga). Although still visually crude, the ever-growing fanbase recognised that real depth could be found beneath the dodgy old exterior (betraying the ancient 8-bit roots of the series) – to this day the *Ultima* games (from number three onwards, anyway) are amongst the most expansive, most ambitious and ultimately the most rewarding series of computer games available.

THERE'S GOLD IN THAT THERE GENRE

Then things really started to take off. SSI, a group of strategy game specialists, won the TSR licence, and the computer world finally gained the benefit of an official D&D game. Admittedly, SSI's first few forays were patchy at best. These were days of experimentation, with the arcade-based *Heroes Of The Lance*, and the more traditionally-styled *Pools* series, pushing things in very different directions. At first the games were still very much a minority interest – those who knew about D&D would buy them, but the average gamesplayer still tended to shy away. Then, earlier this year, *Eye Of The Beholder* was released. Although undoubtedly influenced by *Dungeon Master*, *Eye Of The Beholder* improved every single aspect of the concept – graphics, sound, spells, puzzles, control system, it even had bigger dungeons! *EOTB* triumphed in two ways. It simultaneously offered experts the closest thing yet to Dungeons & Dragons, while welcoming a whole generation of new computer owners to the fantasy genre. That was nearly a year ago. Now get ready for the second wave...

CREATING THE MYTH – THE MEN BEHIND THE NEW WAVE

BOB MALIN – US GOLD'S D&D MAN

Bob, product manager for SSI software at US Gold, first got caught up in the D&D web as a student, back in 1976.

What were the early days like then?

"At the time, all that anyone could get hold of were photocopies of the original rules," he remembers. Introduced to the fantasy world by a friend, Bob soon became obsessed, and cites D&D as the reason he failed his A levels!

Bob Malin: D&D hobbyist gone pro

"After college I got a job at Games & Puzzles, a board and role-playing store. After that I did a stint at Games Workshop, then Virgin, and then Games Workshop again. In 1988 I responded to an advert in the trade press, and here I am, product manager for the entire SSI range."

He admits that his D&D hobby no longer includes the traditional tabletop game. "Now that I'm married with kids, and have less disposable income, I've left that student-orientated world behind. Nowadays I find the solo computer adventuring just as much fun. I don't really miss the old team sessions of D&D at all."

That doesn't stop him keeping a vast collection of D&D stuff, though. In fact, his collection is so old and numerous that he's had it insured to the tune of £4000! Now that's the sign of a hardcore fan!

But what about the future of computer-based D&D?

"Although we've got *Eye Of The Beholder 2* coming to the Amiga next Easter (see True Stories), SSI are already working on a new games engine. Although the *EOTB* games are great, and the public seem keen for more, it would be a shame to let things stagnate. Even with *EOTB 2* they've made quite a few changes to the game engine. The enemies are more intelligent, walking around in groups, splitting off, picking up objects, and generally being more of a nuisance."

Artwork from the forthcoming Arabian Nights-style 'Al-Qadim' gaming world from TSR.

So what of the new games engine?

"The new games engine is a bit of a departure, employing a 3D isometric view, with characters some 80 pixels high. The controls will be very intuitive, with both mouse buttons being used to get at menus. Everything will scroll, too, so there's no break in the action. Softgold in Germany are also working on a entirely different isometric 3D game, *Citadel Of The Black Sun* (mentioned way back in issue one), which we'll publish. There're also additional areas such as CD and speech which have yet to be properly explored. I think *Mega lo Mania* shows the way forward for sound, say, and expect to see things like that in new FRPs. In the meantime, though, *Eye Of The Beholder 2* is pushing the boundaries that bit further."

GYORGY DRAGON (!) OF ARTGAMES – AUTHORS OF *ABANDONED PLACES*

Hungarian based Györgi has something of an interesting past. First introduced to *Bard's Tale* while at a university in South America, he returned to Hungary to find that Dungeons & Dragons had worked its way into the communist way of life.

"The whole team are very much into D&D. We'd played *Dungeon Master*, →

and set out to create something better. We've used a 3D system for the dungeon area, with a 2D map view for travelling in the wilderness. If combat occurs while in the wilderness, then the game switches into 3D mode again."

So what is the general philosophy behind *Abandoned Places*?

"Our main aim was to create a very good role-playing game, a quality product. We're pleased with the results."

Is there a sequel on the cards?

"It all depends on how popular this one is, really. We're very keen to do one, though. It would expand on everything. We'd use the same game system, but have even more visual effects and more spells."

And what about the future of FRP? Where do you see it leading?

"The possibilities with the new Amiga Plus are very interesting, and of course CDTV could really improve the role-playing market. At the moment there isn't enough memory to do everything we'd like. I think the market for fantasy role playing games will really take off when we get advances in technology."

TAG – AUTHOR OF *LEGEND* FOR IMAGE WORKS

Despite *Legend* being his second fantasy role playing game to date, um, 'unusually' monickered Tag has never actually played official Dungeons & Dragons in its pure form at all!

"When I was at University our group decided the rules of D&D were a bit simplistic, so we wrote our own fantasy gaming systems."

"There are an estimated nine million D&D players" – Tom McLaughlin (TSR)

So that explains the interest in fantasy, but how did you get into the computer programming side of things?

"I actually started by doing conversions for Beyond through Incentive Software. From there I moved to Telecomsoft, doing conversions of *Spy Vs Spy*, Mike Singleton's *Lords Of Midnight* etc. I then moved on to become director of Starlight, where *Bloodwych* was my first 16-bit project. A *Bloodwych* data disk followed, and now I'm just finishing *Legend* for Image Works.

"The 3D isometric approach was influenced by playing with the lead figures back at University. I wanted to duplicate the miniatures approach of D&D, and an isometric viewpoint was the obvious way to achieve that."

Have you seen *Shadow Sorcerer* or *Hero Quest* at all?

"I haven't played *Shadow Sorcerer*, but I enjoyed *Hero Quest*. It was a little too simple, but it made an excellent introduction. Similarly, with *Legend* we've tried to give it as wide an appeal as possible. This has been achieved with a system called Intellimation – characters are actually intelligent themselves, making it quite easy for the player to control four different characters at once. But at the same time, you need to know what you're doing to get far. Watching Legend has actually been described as like watching a film. That doesn't mean there aren't puzzles to be solved, and a lot of monster slaughtering, to be done though."

Tag (the one on the left) and chum

So just how big is it?

"Very big! There're over 1000 visitable locations, 23 dungeon levels, wilderness encounters and 25 cities to visit. A 3D isometric view is used at encounter level, with a fractal map of the realm for travel, and major locations are depicted using a 2D interactive system, allowing shopping, information hunting, and general tooling up of characters."

And any last words on what *Legend* has to offer?

"In addition to Intellimation, and the size of the thing, I'm particularly happy with the unusual spell system. It's totally flexible in that players can write their own spells. By putting runes together (which must be bought), hundreds of different spells can be made, and wholly individual spellbooks created. I've also got a polymorphing routine in there, which is strangely similar to the shape-changing fx in Michael Jackson's new video!"

THOMAS MCLAUGHLIN OF TSR (THE CREATORS OF D&D)

TSR are the original and still the most

THE RITUAL DE LO HABITUAL

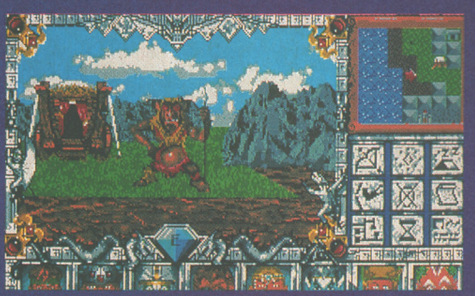
And so with the ever-growing computer fantasy market, and the chart success of titles like *Eye Of The Beholder*, there's the inevitable clutch of software houses releasing new D&D-inspired products. Here's a rough guide to the best of the new contenders...

ULTIMA VI

***Ultima VI* – finally a *Ultima* game with good graphics.**

Okay, I'll come clean. This is my favourite Amiga game *ever* (until the next one). Yes, I know it hasn't been reviewed yet (there just wasn't time or space to review such a BIG game this month), but trust me – nothing comes close. *Ultima VI* may still look a bit simplistic, but behind those rudimentary graphics lies the most in-depth game you'll ever bear witness to. There's practically a whole world in that there games box. I'm not going to say any more. Just wait for next month's review, then believe.

MIGHT & MAGIC III



More graphics, more monsters, more everything really.

Before *Eye Of The Beholder 2* ever makes an appearance on the Amiga, *Might & Magic III* will be with us. Although it shares the same 3D view, it's actually very different from *EOTB*. The gameplay seems reminiscent of the *Ultima* games, what with wide open spaces featuring key locations, and much more obscure, word-based puzzles. This makes it very different from the intensive maze-and-combat approach of *Beholder*, with the features of the landscape playing a much bigger part in movement strategies. *Might And Magic III* 's biggest asset is its size. It's so much bigger than any of the other 3D role-players, and the feel is very individual. In the "Just how great is it?" stakes it probably slots somewhere between *EOTB* and *EOTB2*, but you'll just have to wait until next month (fingers crossed) to find out.

SHADOWLANDS

See the light and feel the darkness in *Shadowlands*.

The second game format which seems to be gaining favour amongst D&D players is the isometric 3D approach – as used in the Domark's forthcoming *Shadowlands*. With several aces up its sleeve, *Shadowlands* promises to be just that little bit different. Firstly there's the user-definability of the four main characters. This extends beyond the usual name and character class, right down to the hair style, nose shape etc (not unlike the character generation in *Flames Of Freedom*). But the really clever stuff in *Shadowlands* is based around the 'Photoscape' system. Photoscape is used to cast light and create shadows on the 3D environment . This leads to light-activated traps, and eerie effects when burning torches are taken from the walls and carried by the party (and subsequently run out, leaving your people in the dark). *Shadowlands* also benefits from the ability to split up the party into groups, not something that's usually allowed in multi-character games.

successful manufacturer's of fantasy role playing games. So who better to ask about the past, present and future of D&D than TSR spokesperson Thomas McLaughlin?

Tell us about the start of it all, Tom.

"The origins of D&D lie as far back as 1974. Gary Gygax, a wargaming hobbyist, decided one day that rather than attack a castle from outside (as would be done in a standard wargame), having the soldiers tunnel underneath, and consequently encounter all manner of creatures at close quarters, would be far more interesting. From this idea a world was born, populated with mythical monsters, magic and melee combat."

And so how did this grow to become such a success?

"The first step was to actually write down a rules system for this new type of game. From there, photocopies were made and sold into hobby stores. It was then just a small step to putting the rules into a small box. Within three or four years the game really started to catch on, selling a couple of thousand a year. Eventually TSR went into full production. There're now an estimated nine million players worldwide – six million of those are in the USA, although actually, the highest growth area is the UK."

And what of the computer side of Dungeons & Dragons?

"Over a dozen games are now produced by SSI. Although D&D is the most successful licence, we've also got Buck Rogers which is proving very popular too."

So, what next for TSR?

"We're focussing mainly on bringing more players to the hobby, rather than drastically changing the gaming system. The Gamma World system is to be revived next year, and we're launching the Al-Qadim scenario – an Arabian game world filled with genies, magic carpets and other 1001 Nights-style adventures. We're also going to devote more time to the Dark World game system, and of course there's our range of books. We've actually gained recognition in the US as the best-selling fantasy and science fiction publishers. When you consider the competition and their quantity of titles, it's no mean feat."

"The fanatics usually brand me a devil worshipper" – Richard Garriott

RICHARD GARRIOTT – LORD BRITISH HIMSELF

The most popular and most enduring of computer fantasy role playing games has to be the *Ultima* series. Written by and featuring(!) Richard Garriott (aka Lord British), they've risen from very basic hack-and-slash affairs to the pinnacle of what's currently being achieved – *Ultima VII* (for the moment on PC only). This latest game really is stunning, though for the moment Amiga owners will have to make do with the not-quite-so-stunning-but-still-very-stunning -anyway *Ultima VI*. But what of the mysterious Mr Garriott himself?

Hooked on D&D at high school in 1977, he soon got involved with computers and it wasn't long before he began coming up with titles such as *D&D1*, *D&D2* etc. His commercial break came with *Alkabeth* – Richard managed to pay his way through high school with the money.

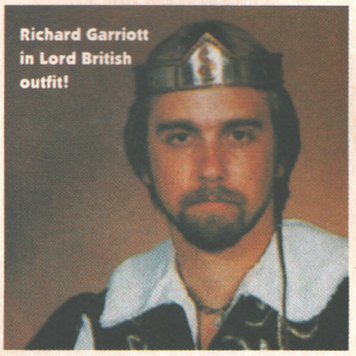
"*Ultima* was started in the fall of '79. I was going to school at the University Of Texas, and *Ultima I* was the first program I wrote with the intention of having it published. The program for *Ultima II* was very special because it was the first program I wrote in machine language."

Although seemingly all part of one huge story, the *Ultima* series was never really planned.

"*Ultimas* kind of evolve, in the sense that when I finish one I enter a state of total game brain death. I just try to recover as much of my sanity as possible. But, suddenly, I'll get this start of an inspiration. That blossoms into a premise and the concept follows from there."

Perhaps not surprisingly for a well known American author, Richard has experienced his fair share of problems with obsessive oddballs.

"I don't appreciate all the fire and →



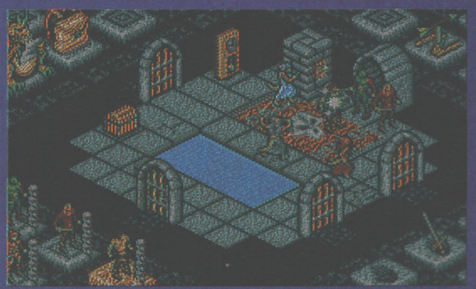
Richard Garriott in Lord British outfit!

ABANDONED PLACES

No screen flipping necessary in *Abandoned Places*.

One look at *Abandoned Places* and it's obvious that it's very much inspired by *Dungeon Master* and *Eye Of The Beholder* games. Originating from Hungary, the game was designed to follow in the footsteps of *Dungeon Master*, which the programmers felt had too many flaws. The idea is also to expand on the standard first-person perspective system (exterior movement is done via a bird's eye plan view of the wilderness). Although the control and object manipulation system is similar to *Captive* and *Eye Of The Beholder*, the display is arranged in such a way as to keep as much information on the screen as possible, doing away with the numerous menus of its competitors. Playing the game is therefore a remarkably user-friendly affair, and though the 3D area is fairly small there's still quite a bit of detail. And the fireball spell just has to be seen (we're talking major league barbecue here).

LEGEND



Cool graphics and action aplenty in Tag's *Legend*.

Legend follows, like *Shadowlands*, in the footsteps of *Shadow Sorcerer* and *Hero Quest*. The main game employs a 3D isometric approach, but author Tag has a gaming background as long as a very long arm, so the angle should be very firmly on the playability aspect of things. Despite the different game style, *Legend* is actually the sequel to *Bloodwych*, a pretty successful *Dungeon Master*-style FRP, notable for its split screen approach (allowing simultaneous two-player games). *Legend* will hopefully bridge the gap between the hardcore *Shadow Sorcerer* and the simplistic *Hero Quest*, giving players an easy entry into the fantasy style. *Legend* takes a very user-friendly approach (something which too many FRPs seem to ignore), even to the point of abandoning concepts such as the need to collect food to prevent starvation. Publishers Mirrorsoft are obviously hoping for a *Hero Quest*-style crossover. A fantasy game that's easy to play – whatever next?

BLACK CRYPT

The gorgeous 3D finery of EA's *Black Crypt*.

Electronic Arts' *Black Crypt* has been programmed by American team Raven Soft. Unashamed of their influences, Raven say that it was inspired by playing *Dungeon Master* and *Eye Of The Beholder*, with the intention of creating something better. *Black Crypt* was conceived with the intention of stealing the FRP crown, and making full use of the graphics capabilities of the Amiga, while sound has been better utilised too, with music adding to the atmosphere. Careful attention was also paid to the user interface, while the spell system used closely follows that of real D&D, with spells even being forgotten if left unused. With *Black Crypt*, EA could have a real hit on their hands.

AND NOT FORGETTING...

The MB Games-licensed *Space Crusade* from Gremlin, Gremlin's more overtly D&D *Deamonsgate*, and (of course) *Celtic Legends*, *Knightmare*, and *Lord Of The Rings*, all reviewed in this very issue.

brimstone mail we receive from religious fanatics. Most of these people admit that they have never played an *Ultima* game or even seen one being played, and they never will. I wish I could understand why – in some cases, an individual describes something offensive in one of our games that simply isn't there. Other people are upset by the covers on the packages.

They usually then go on to say that the ankh motif that appears on the cover of the *Ultima IV* package is actually a sign of the devil. I chose the ankh because it was the symbol of life and rebirth in ancient Egypt! When all's said and done, the fanatics usually brand me a devil worshipper, as a dramatic conclusion to their 'you're going to rot in hell' lectures."

Quite. So what's to come in future *Ultima* games?

"Object-orientated design, as seen in *Ultima VI*, has made the game more reliable and more logical in nature. *Ultima VII* will look very similar, but slightly more sophisticated. The main view will be much more in the face, and objects no longer all have to be the same size. This allows the visual realism of the game to take another significant stride forward."

Heaven only knows what Lord British is planning for *Ultima VIII*! ●

Special acknowledgments:
Thomas McLaughlin & TSR
Stewart Bell & Electronic Zoo
Computer Fun & Games magazine

RECOMMENDED READING (ETC)

Alright, alright – so some of these books and films aren't actually any *good* or anything, but they do get you into the spirit of the thing...

BOOK AUTHORS
JRR Tolkien, Fritz Lieber, HP Lovecraft, Ursula Le Guin, Michael Moorcock, Clive Barker...

RECOMMENDED FILMS & TV
Lord Of The Rings
Krull
Red Sonja
Conan The Barbarian
Conan The Destroyer
Dragonslayer
Willow
Knightmare
Crystal Maze
Labyrinth
Clash Of The Titans
The Storyteller
Jason & The Argonauts
The Adventure Game
The 7th Voyage Of Sinbad...

Just because it's nice – gratuitous artwork from Electronic Zoo's *Abandoned Places*.

WIN YOUR VERY OWN D&D STARTUP KIT

That's right. Now's the chance to get involved in tabletop Dungeons & Dragons, thanks to those generous dudes at US Gold. We've got six special Advanced Dungeons & Dragons packs to give away. Each pack contains: An SSI/US Gold D&D T-shirt (a very fetching black number with a cute babe on the front), a Dungeon Master's Guide, a Player's Guide, Monster Compendium, and the essential set of silly-sided dice. The first six people who get their names pulled out of the hat who correctly answer the following three questions get the goodies...

All you need to get stuck into a Dungeons & Dragons campaign, courtesy of those jolly nice people at US Gold (publishers of *Eye Of The Beholder*).

1 In the book, *The Hobbit*, what was Thorin's surname?

2 Red Sonja was created by which fantasy writer?

3 Which knight played Zeus in *Clash Of The Titans*?

Just jot the answers down on a postcard, or the back of an envelope, and send it off to D&D Startup Kit Compo, AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. And remember, get it to us by the end of January or there'll be no D&D stuff for you!

COMPETITION

MOONSTONE

A HARD DAYS KNIGHT

SO MUCH FUN -YOU'LL DIE!

Moonstone - a remarkable combination of fast, aggressive combat action and subtle role-play set in a fantasy world, that uniquely challenges your brain and your reflexes - while covering you in gore.

Oh, by the way, if the sight of so much blood upsets you, don't worry. The blood is an option!

Moonstone features nearly 1,000 frames of incredible animation in 2 Megabytes of monsters and creatures, over 60 beautifully painted backdrops and detailed scenery. Sound effects are high quality digital samples and includes a full musical score and stunning full screen animated introductory and game complete sequences.

12

Moonstone contains scenes of strong graphic imagery with particular realism. Although these scenes are optional, this product is voluntarily rated 12. Parental Guidance is recommended for younger players, however this is not a legal requirement.

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MINDSCAPE

For your local dealer, contact: Mindscape International Ltd, The Coach House, Hooklands Estate, Scaynes Hill, West Sussex RH17 7NG. Tel: 0444 831 761

COLIN

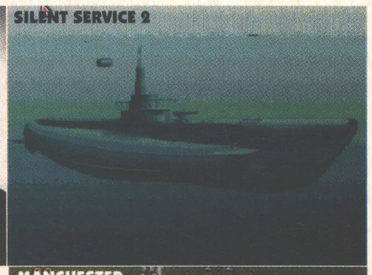
Eight games of the year? This is going to be tricky. How about *Knights Of The Sky* to start with? It's a gorgeously animated flight sim with the onus on flight and fight, rather than techie gadgets. Seat of your pants stuff and no mistake.

Then there's *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, of course. It's incredibly close to the real thing – even a snooker player who had never played a computer game before could not fail to be amazed. There's nothing especially amazing about *Robocod*, but this arcade romp is packed with wit, colour and above all, fun – it wipes the floor with most of the games people buy consoles for.

Personal bias forces me to include *Manchester United Europe* – for me (even allowing for the fact that I'm a Man U fanatic), the finest soccer game ever. The character moves are convincing, and the action is total football.

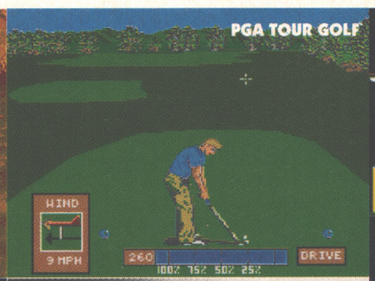
Which is something you couldn't really say about *Silent Service 2*, but it's great all the same. One for quiet nights in, when you don't really feel like doing very much – it's scary and moody and although it may seem slow to some, I find it an absolute joy. The same goes for *Toki*, an arcade conversion which shows what really *can* be done. It's packed with hundreds of appealing characters and loads of tricky puzzles – a real classic in the 'just one more try' mould.

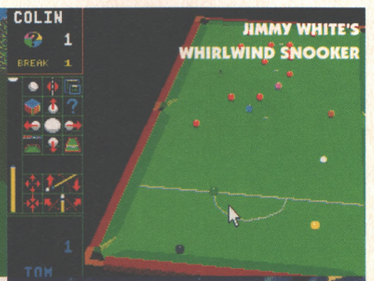
Ideally I'd move into a rugby link here, but neither of this year's games were really good enough (one *almost* was though – I'll try and sneak it in at the end as a little 'extra' when nobody's looking). Instead I'm going to nominate *PGA Tour Golf*, another mellow game – I spent so much time playing this that it would be a sin not to. Next – and I don't care how much the rest of the team mock me for it – I'm going for *International Championship Athletics*. Terrible graphics, appalling game design, but somehow it's terrific fun. Unfortunately, I'm the only one who enjoys this game. Which is something that can't be said about the fab *Rug* (*Oh no, you don't! -Ed*)

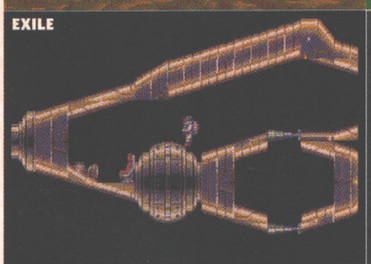


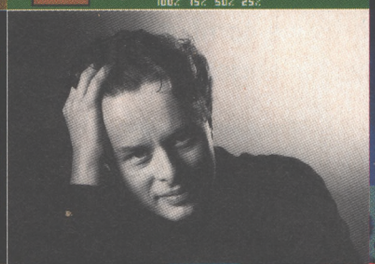
1991, eh? Didn't you just love it? Gorbachev survived an internal coup, Yugoslavia was torn apart by civil war, the EEC moved inevitably towards a single currency and, most importantly, Electronic Arts released *Halls Of Montezuma*. (*Eh? -Ed*) Oh yes, and AMIGA POWER was launched...

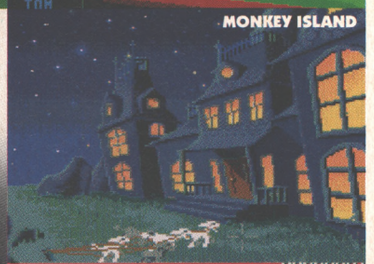
OUR BRILLIANT YEAR











MATT

Despite the number of high quality games there've been this year – and I'd argue 1991's been one of the best ever – there've been precious few I've actually taken home and played. Objectively I can see that yes, there've been some world beating flight sims, and yes, *Eye Of The Beholder* obviously overshadows most FRP games, but sorry – I don't play that stuff. Here, then, are the ones I've loved.

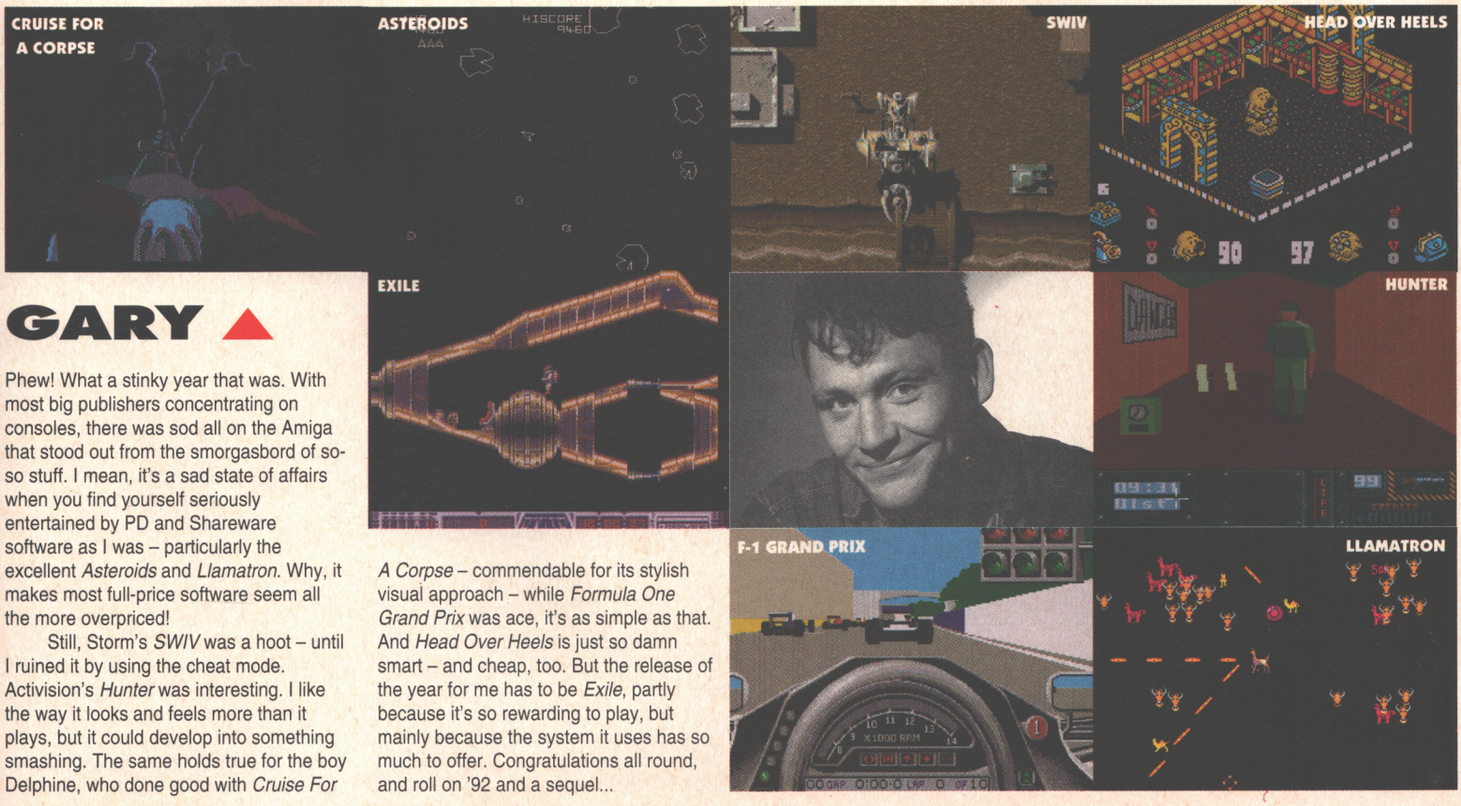
The delicious *Secret Of Monkey Island* has to be first, of course – small but perfectly formed, genuinely hilarious, and more than anything the game to show how professional things should be. In fact, professionalism is probably the keyword here – *Populous II*, *First Samurai* and *PGA Tour Golf* all earn their places for the same reason. As does *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, come to think of it – even if you're normally unimpressed by 'super fast 3D', you'll find technical ability put to real and playable use here.

Other favourites? Well, *Exile* I found to be an excellently put together arcade adventure, while *Heimdall's* glorious graphics earned it's place. And *Robocod* was simply fun – almost as good as replaying Ocean's recent *Rainbow Collection* in fact, my *real* favourite release of the past twelve months...

BRILLIANT

Yes, even in a year when Domark set new industry records by releasing *Toobin'* for a breathtaking fifth time, Amiga owners were besieged by more new software than ever before. Luckily, the discerning game lovers of the country were aided in their search for titles worthy of the ever-increasing prices asked for them by the appearance of a magazine which finally stood up and told the truth to an industry that had gotten away with it for far too long. The words would soon become engraved across the heart of the nation – "Not Every Game Deserves 85 percent".

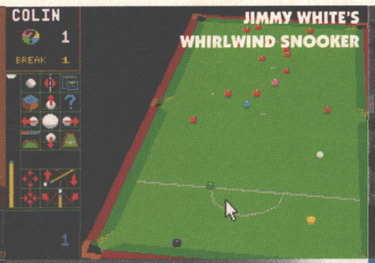
Ah yes, but some games *do*. Pick a genre – any genre – and chances are you'll find the best ever example of the type released over the past twelve months. Here are our personal favourites...

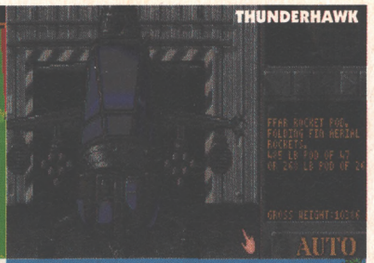


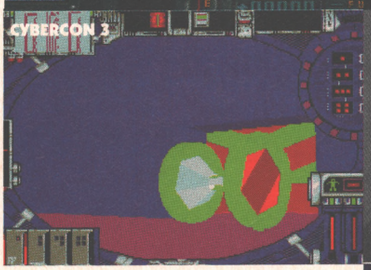
GARY

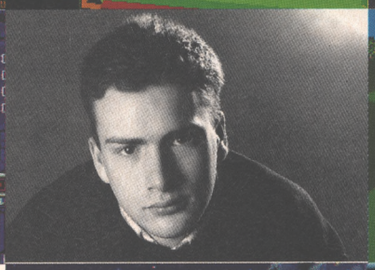
Phew! What a stinky year that was. With most big publishers concentrating on consoles, there was sod all on the Amiga that stood out from the smorgasbord of so-so stuff. I mean, it's a sad state of affairs when you find yourself seriously entertained by PD and Shareware software as I was – particularly the excellent *Asteroids* and *Llamatron*. Why, it makes most full-price software seem all the more overpriced!

Still, Storm's *SWIV* was a hoot – until I ruined it by using the cheat mode. Activision's *Hunter* was interesting. I like the way it looks and feels more than it plays, but it could develop into something smashing. The same holds true for the boy Delphine, who done good with *Cruise For A Corpse* – commendable for its stylish visual approach – while *Formula One Grand Prix* was ace, it's as simple as that. And *Head Over Heels* is just so damn smart – and cheap, too. But the release of the year for me has to be *Exile*, partly because it's so rewarding to play, but mainly because the system it uses has so much to offer. Congratulations all round, and roll on '92 and a sequel...



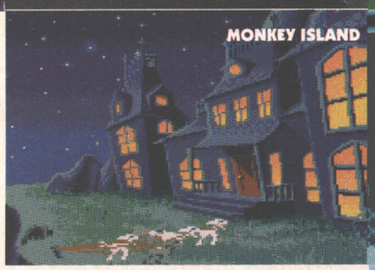






JONATHAN

There've only been a few games good enough to drag me away from my short-wave radio set (and all the appalling wargames AMIGA POWER keep giving me to review) this year, but Psygnosis' monster hit *Lemmings* was one. It brought out the father figure in me, but most of the games I've liked this year have been those allowing me to leave the unpleasantries of this world behind and roam around in an alternative, computer-generated universe. *Cybercon III* suited this purpose admirably, but for a less claustrophobic experience a brisk stroll in the open air of *PGA Tour Golf* or a quick spot of swimming and orienteering courtesy of *Hunter* was the ideal way to get some healthy exercise without having to leave my bedroom. *The Secret Of Monkey Island* fulfiled every boy's dream to be a daring swashbuckler, while my fighter pilot fantasies were superbly catered for in *Flight Of The Intruder* and (if you'll allow me a little journalistic licence) *Thunderhawk*. And *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*? Well, after all that frantic physical exertion you've got to relax somehow, haven't you?

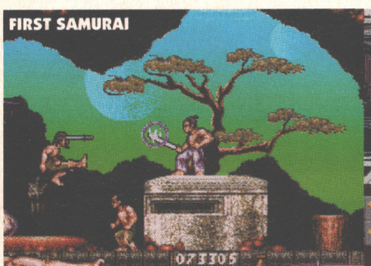


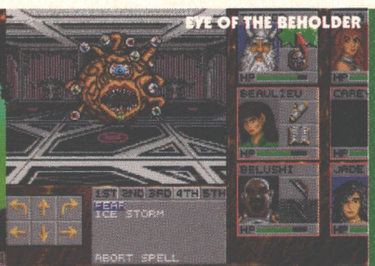
MARK

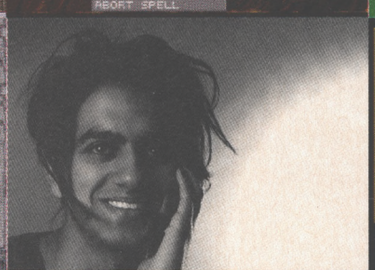
Aside from *SWIV* (and some groovy PD stuff), this has been something of a disappointing year for straight blasting games. The upside of this is that the software houses seem to be producing more professional and more mature products. Who would have believed we'd get games as polished and downright playable as *Mega lo Mania*, *Monkey Island* and *Formula One Grand Prix* in 1991?

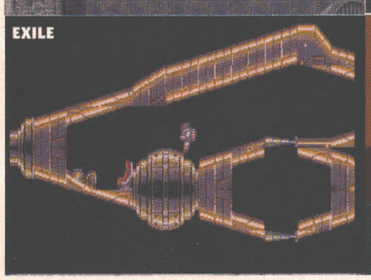
For me though, the top product of the year has to be *Ultima VI*. It may look pretty basic, but nothing comes close in terms of playing hours per pound. *Eye Of The Beholder*, for instance, doesn't quite match it, but is still a damn fine piece of software – US Gold and SSI really came up trumps with this one, getting the D&D formula spot on, and taking it into the mainstream in the process.

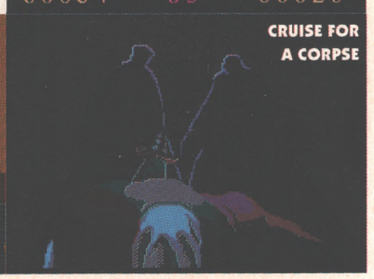
Honourable mentions have to go to the shallow but terminally cool *Lotus II* and *Prince Of Persia* (which kind of almost scrapes in to 1991). The best Amiga year yet, I'd say. I wonder how 1992 will compare. Me? I can't wait for *Mega lo Mania 2...*











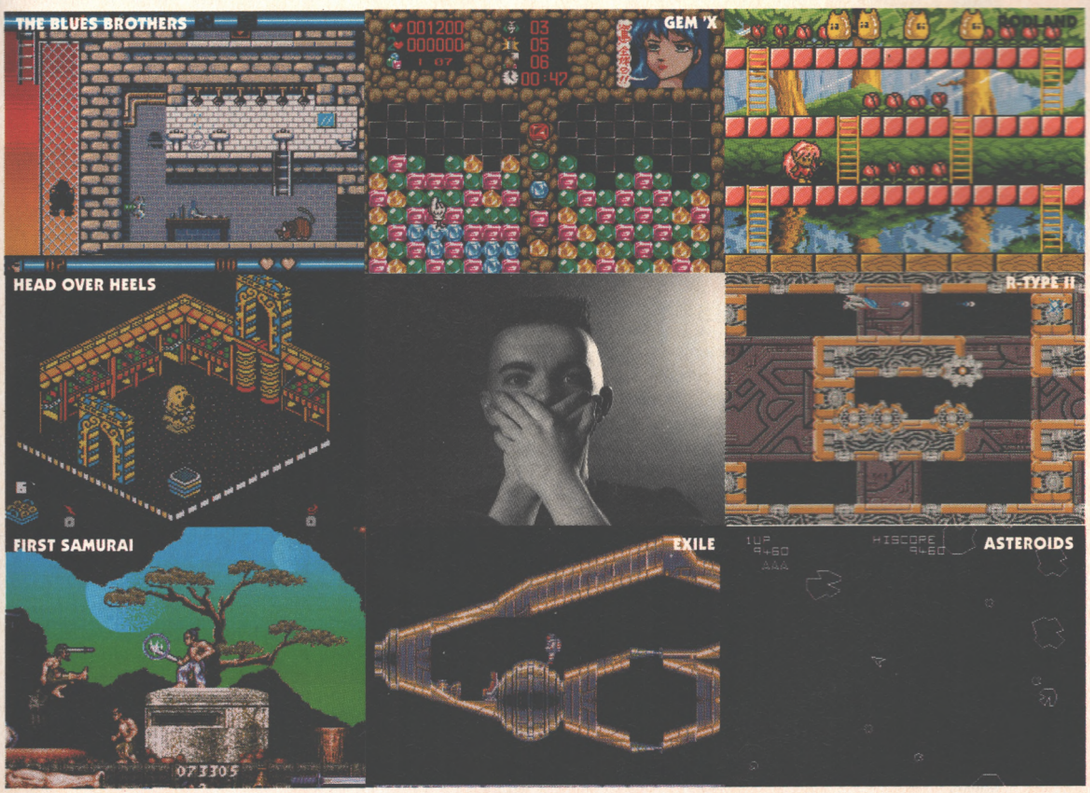
RICH

Some people say I don't do anything except lie around under my duvet all day then get up in the middle of the night to go out and chase babes. Not true! There's *actually* nothing I like better than lying around under my duvet with my joystick playing Amiga games all day, *then* going out at night and chasing babes – and babe-chasing has been temporarily suspended altogether on a few occasions, courtesy of this little lot.

First Samurai and *Exile* are two of the best arcade adventures ever, while *Hunter*'s hugely impressive fast-moving 3D graphics are as good as anything I've seen the Amiga pull off outside of tedious PD demos. Speaking of PD, *Super Twintris* beat both commercial Amiga *Tetris* games hollow, while for more cerebral entertainment, *Eye Of The Beholder* and *Cruise For A Corpse* kept me out of Bristol's seedier nightclubs for several weeks, as did the very atmospheric (and very different) *Alien Breed* – if you've ever watched the Alien movies and wanted to get involved in the action yourself, this is for you. And finally there's *Gazza 2*, which is a bit crap, really. So why's it here? Answers on a postcard please. (*To Rich's house –Ed*).

STUART

I'm not sure I agree with Matt and Mark about it having been a great year. For me, maybe 25 of the 300+ games we've reviewed have been even moderately endearing on a personal level, which is an unimpressive 8 percent. Of those, about half have actually been lastingly enjoyable, but after some merciless pruning I've finally come up with a top eight. (I've hardly been given any room though – perhaps in an effort to keep me out of trouble – so this is going to read like a bit of a list). *The Blues Brothers*, *Gem 'X* and *Asteroids* are the only things which have had me coming into the office early to sneak in a few games before work, while *R-Type II* and *Rodland* showed how coin-ops *should* be converted. *Head Over Heels* and *Exile*, while magnificent in totally different ways, shared a common bond of superb design, while (*Snip! -Ed*)



THOSE VOTES IN FULL

So where does that leave us?

Well, with a table something like this – revealing (hurrah!) the AMIGA POWER Critics Choice of 1991. Comment below, but in the meantime here are those votes...

EXILE 4 votes
FIRST SAMURAI 3 votes
HUNTER 3 votes
MONKEY ISLAND 3 votes
PGA TOUR GOLF 3 votes
JIMMY WHITE'S 3 votes
HEAD OVER HEELS 2 votes
ASTEROIDS 2 votes
CRUISE FOR A CORPSE 2 votes
ROBOCOD 2 votes
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER 2 votes
F1 GRAND PRIX 2 votes
SWIV 2 votes
THE BLUES BROTHERS, RODLAND, HEIMDALL, ULTIMA VI, GEM 'X, POPULOUS 2, MEGA LO MANIA, R-TYPE II, SUPER TWINTRIS, THUNDERHAWK, TOKI, ALIEN BREED, GAZZA 2, LLAMATRON, KNIGHTS OF THE SKY, CYBERCON III, SILENT SERVICE II, FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER, LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2, MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE, PRINCE OF PERSIA, LEMMINGS, INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS - 1 vote each

An odd selection, to be sure. Who would have predicted such a low(ish) profile and generally critically un-lauded release as *Exile* would garner more votes than anything else? Looks like we're all still suckers for the old C64 style of arcade adventure gameplay – though interestingly enough, *Exile* also includes some new and innovative gameplay features. Maybe that's why it got voted for so much – here, in one game, are combined the virtues of traditional strong gameplay with innovative ideas and design, the things we've been banging on about all year.

(Remember also – popular games like *Lemmings* and *Prince Of Persia*, which appeared at the turn of the year, were no doubt forgotten about by many reviewers, which explains their limited appearance. And remember also – Mark cheated, voting for *Ultima VI*, a game that isn't even out yet! Some people, you just can't trust them...)

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IF YOU WANT OUR ADVICE, BUY IT!

In his mid 20s, but still looking like he packs his satchel for school each morning, it's international computer game entrepreneur and – yes! – whiz-kid David Darling.

ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!

The classic quote from a million 8-bit boxes still seems strangely apt – it's the remarkable Code Masters (in their own words...)

They're a loveable bunch, the Codies, aren't they? That constant stream of happy-go-lucky, fun products; their cheery smiling faces; the hilarious publicity shots; the cheeky self-written 'quotes' on the back of the boxes ("Amazing graphics, unbelievable gameplay" – David Darling); that indescribable feeling of, well, pure jealousy when we thought of how much money this pair of chirpy, eternally fifteen year old school kids were making. How we wanted to kick their heads in!

And then it all started to change. Perhaps it was *Dizzy*'s virtual residency in the Top Ten, perhaps it was the audacity of it all (beating Nintendo in court – imagine!), perhaps it was the fact that they were still hanging in there – and yes, growing! – while contemporaries crashed and burned, and perhaps – just perhaps – it was because nobody could honestly remember a time when Code Masters had actually released what you could call a *bad* game. Whatever, we all started to take them seriously. And respect them, because whatever it is they have – and sometimes it's pretty hard to see – it's working.

Despite the image that continues to this day, Code Masters *isn't* just two kids in a bedroom playing, and occasionally programming, games. Far from it – the Darlings themselves do precious little (if any) coding at all these days. Instead, they head a successful – and yes, *international* – company, ideas dreamt up as schoolkids selling millions of units worldwise. In the course of these interviews you'll be reading..:

David Darling
Managing Director
Directly responsible for the bulk of the computer game development side of the company (amongst many other things).

Paul Ransom
European Development Manager
As his title suggests, Paul's responsible on a day-to-day basis for the development and progress of Code Masters computer (as opposed to *console*) games.

Richard Darling
Research Director
Richard spends most of his time with console development these days – this is definitely where much of the future lies for the Codies, though they're reluctant to leave behind the Amigas and STs, the Spectrums and C64s popular in Europe. Indeed, most of their successful NES games will turn up on the Amiga sooner or later, as the three of them explain...

On being the Stock, Aitken and Waterman of the computer world

"Yeah, the Stock, Aitken and Waterman analogy. I guess it's fairly accurate really, in that we've got a formula for success and we're selling stuff people buy. Sometimes you get a bit ashamed of it I suppose, but people enjoy it, so we must be doing something worthwhile."
Paul Ransom

BUBBLE DIZZY

Originally developed as part of a US Nintendo *Dizzy* game, then scheduled to appear on a *Dizzy* compilation, this is now going to be a stand-alone product after all. The concept is simple – you (as Dizzy) are stuck at the bottom of a very deep sea, and to make your way to the surface have to ride the bubbles which wobble up from the bottom. The problem is the bubbles all burst after a few seconds, so you'll be making good progress, mistime a jump, and then spend frustrating seconds sinking fast towards the bottom again. There are various fish and things to avoid in it too. A pure arcade game then, nothing to do with traditional *Dizzy* at all, but proof (if proof is needed) of just how versatile our ovoid little chum is proving to be.

Whales, sharks, octopuses and a cute little Dizzy with a snorkel – top fun in the new *Bubble Dizzy*

On the success of *Dizzy*

"We originally designed *Dizzy* for young kids and he's been good for them, but increasingly it seems to be that everyone's a secret fan! It does seem to be something to do with his character, but equally it's got a lot to do with the mental puzzles in the game – parents enjoy doing them too. In fact, often they play the games with their children, and get just as much fun out of them themselves, so perhaps that's the secret."
David Darling

"We still refer to Dizzy as 'Mr Easy-to-draw'... an odd creation"

"Part of my job is to build characters up, and of course the most successful one we've ever had is Dizzy. We're sort of creating a Mario, though he's obviously not as big yet. At the moment Dizzy's far and away our most popular character – CJ the elephant is only two games old, Steg (the slug), Spike (the Viking) and Slightly (the wizard) are all new characters, and Little Puff (the dragon) we've sort of given up on. He wasn't much of a character anyway, but it was the name that cause the most trouble – people didn't really like the idea of playing a game called 'little homosexual in Dragonland.'

"With Dizzy, our egg character, we've obviously hit on something, though we're not exactly sure what. To be honest we still refer to him as 'Mr Easy-to-draw', which is what he is – just a big blob with a face, arms and big boxing gloves for hands. We've tried to give him more character and make him do more things in the newer games, but it's a very odd creation we've got here. The fact is, though, people like him – and he gives us a recognisable character to promote the games with, without having to fork out for a licence. Sure, the Hi-Tec *Wacky Races* property, for instance, would suit us down to the ground, but they had to pay for that, and we didn't.

"Actually, the interesting thing about *Dizzy* is it took six months from its original 8-bit release for it to start charting – for a long time we thought the game had been a complete flop. It was around the time we were doing lots of *Simulators*, and the Oliver Twins, who'd done some for us already, turned up with this odd arcade adventure instead of the game they were meant to be doing. We were a bit annoyed with them, but in the end put it out anyway as a sort of favour, and it stiffed, just as expected.

"Then, months later when we'd all but forgotten it, it started to chart and just stayed there. It wasn't selling an incredible number of copies a month but it was consistent – it became a chart fixture for months. By the time we got round to the sequel so many people had bought the first game and were waiting for the second that it went straight in at number one. And the rest, as they say, is history."
Paul Ransom

"Generally we think you're better coming up with your own characters and games – and *Dizzy*'s the real proof of that. Some of the cartoon things Hi-Tec do would work as Code Masters games, but we always think it's better to develop our own. That way we can actually start to think about merchandising the characters back into other mediums ourselves. We're already working on a line of *Dizzy* products – clocks, mugs and the like. Goodness knows where we go from here, but it's getting interesting."
David Darling →

Andrew and Philip Oliver – creators of *Dizzy* – in 'interesting' photo opportunity situation. Here they are researching *Kwik Snax*(!)

On the 'new-look' Dizzy

"For the new game, *Spellbound Dizzy*, which we'll probably release at Easter as part of the second *Dizzy* collection, we've added quite a bit to the character. He's got oxygen tanks and goes underwater for a bit, for instance, but more surprisingly, perhaps, he now has a whole range of expressions and changes them throughout the game. It might not sound like much to you, but it's big news for Dizzy!"
Paul Ransom

"With each game we just try and give him a few more features, a few new characteristics. The more expressions he has and characters there are in the games, the better really. Now you can tell whether he's happy or sad and so on.

"*Dizzy*'s been our second release in the States on the NES after a game called *Micro Machines*, but it's really too early to tell how well he's going down over there."
Richard Darling

On not doing shoot-'em-ups any more

"We don't want anything to do with shoot-'em-ups basically – they're just not very successful for us. *Sky High Stuntman*'s pretty slick, approaching Bitmap standards, but it's the first one we've done in ages, and we don't have immediate plans for more. I think it's perhaps because it's much harder to add any feeling of individuality or character to a straight blasting game."
Paul Ransom

On not doing *Simulators* any more

"It wasn't a conscious decision to stop doing *Simulators* as such – and indeed we might do more next year – but fewer people who come to us seem interested in doing them anymore. We're often led by programmers coming along and saying what they want to do, and most have been interested in cute games lately. Some are very proficient – they bring in complete game designs and characters they've created. It's great for us, because very little needs to be done with them before release."
Paul Ransom

"We don't think of the other original budget people as our competition"

"You're right, there haven't been all that many *Simulators* lately, have there? We stopped doing them because companies like Alternative started doing some crappy 'Simulators' which spoiled the whole idea for us a bit. They've got money problems now so it obviously didn't work too well!

"In actual fact, though it's good to have healthy competition, we don't really think of the other original budget people as our main competition – it's more the Oceans and US Golds of this world we're worried about."
David Darling

On games for kids

"It's true, the age group for our games does go very low – perhaps it's because the characters are cute, perhaps it's because the Codies have got a reputation of doing games for kids, I don't know. That doesn't mean we don't get lots of adults playing them though, particularly things like the *Dizzy* games which actually have some quite intricate puzzles in them. You'd be really shocked at how esoteric some of them are, but what we try to do is make it so they're ridiculously obvious once you know how to do them. You want to kick yourself for not having thought of the answer before!

"Lots of the adult gameplayer we get are the type who like and trust our games and will go through them with the kids – it's very much a family thing – and in fact we're probably educating the kids in many ways. Other adults just like to play them on their own, though I don't know if they're of subnormal intelligence or what..."
Paul Ransom

"We're quite proud of the fact that we produce games than anyone can get into instantly, and that means that they have to appeal to all age groups. That said though, we're aware that on the 16-bit machines many people are into more mature games, and that's something we're planning to get involved with too.

"Though it's not been properly decided, I don't think, we'll probably put these out on a different label – though we won't be hiding the fact that they're Code Masters games, they will still have our name on them too. I think the idea is that they'll be like sort of sophisticated, grown up and less cartoony versions of the *Dizzy* games – the characters will be more realistic, there'll be more text in them (though they won't be text adventures), and so on. We very much admire the interface in *The Secret Of Monkey Island*, so that'll be an influence too."
Richard Darling

On full price software

"We've totally given up on the full price market on the Amiga and the various

AND HERE'S ONE I PREPARED EARLIER...

So how do you go about developing a typical Code Masters game? Development Manager Paul Ransom explains...

Case study one: *Seymour Goes To Hollywood*

MONTH ONE
This is when we began work on Seymour. One thing about doing formula games like this is that we can spend an equal amount of time on the game design and graphics as we do on the programming. It saves us from having the coding take over, which is the sort of thing that gives you brilliant scrolling demos which don't work as games.

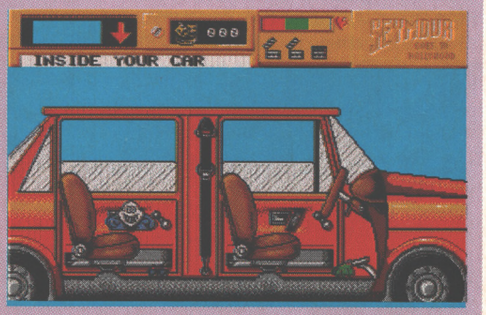
We find we can reuse a lot of our code for various games – we have a standard map editor for many 16-bit products say, though we haven't done a game creator in case we became stifled by it – which saves a lot of time. The first job, then, is to work out a map of the game – it all flows on from there. In actual fact this game started life as *Dizzy 5*. Seymour as a character didn't exist at this point – it was going to be the tale of how Dizzy leaves the yolk folk and steps into the real world.

With Seymour, the Dizzy similarity is clear – small round body, big hands, dumb expression, it's all there.

MONTH TWO
The game, we quickly decided, was to fall into the traditional Dizzy pick-up-and-use gameplay. The main interest came from the various backdrops and characters setting the game in a film studio would give us. One section was based on The Wizard Of Oz, another on Frankenstein, then there'd be a Grease-style teen movie, Sherlock Holmes, Young Guns, and 'Dick Bracey', which would be a fifties-style cop movie. Our only worry at this point was that Gary Bracey, the Creative Director at Ocean, would get offended..!

MONTH THREE
As we develop characters we decide on more and more complicated ground rules for them. It was around this point, then, that David Darling decided it wouldn't be right to take Dizzy out of his normal fantasy setting and put him in the real world. Dizzy had been treated so, well, tweely up until that point and it seemed like too big a step to take – also, to be honest, you're never exactly sure what element it is about a character that makes him work. You don't want to change any of the basics if you can help it unless it spoils the magic.

That left us with problem – we had this game, but no hero for it. In the end I plumped for this blobby character we'd originally designed for a cowboy game, mainly because he's a similar sort of shape to Dizzy and has the sort of body where all expression of character can be limited to the central section of his body, which makes him a lot easier for the programmers to use.



Seymour – he's the little grinny chap on the left – starts his adventure on the back seat of a car! Wow!

MONTH FOUR
This is where we're up to now. The basic game is there – we're merely setting up the puzzles and tweaking how it plays. The character of Seymour – we've now decided he's an odd-job man – has been established. As far as naming a character is concerned, it really is a case of just trying things out until they sound right. Sometimes programmers think of a good name which suits characters, sometimes it's people here. CJ the elephant was originally called Jimmy or something, but that mutated into Columbus Jumbo which David Darling shortened to CJ. It just seemed to fit...

HOVERSPRINT

Miami Chase wasn't a one off – Code Masters are doing a number of two-disk games for £7.99! Couple that to solid 3D vectors, normally only ever seen in full price games, and you get a fairly remarkable product – a futuristic driving game with various different craft to chose between, three computer controlled opponents, league tables, practice tracks and gameplay coming across as a cross between *Hard Drivin'* and EA's *Powerdrome*.

"This is what our simulations have now mutated into. The programmers Exentrix came to us with the promise that they would do us a 3D game, and since I think 3D gives such an impression of quality we went for it. Nobody's done a solid 3D game at this price before – I think Mastertronic did a wire frame one once – so hopefully we're starting something new. Oh yes, and you're right – the reason we chose hover cars is because it would have taken far too long trying to get convincing wheels in!' says Paul Ransom.

***Hard Drivin'*-style solid 3D roads (above), a choice of vehicles (left) – *Hover Sprint* is the sort of game everyone would have got very excited about at full price a couple of years ago. And now it's an original budget – the times, they are a-changin'...**

home computers. When we've done full price games – say *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* – they've worked much better as budget re-releases. It's not to do with the quality of the games not being high enough – *Dizzy* costs $50 or so on some consoles in the States because that's how the market is there, and it hasn't harmed sales in the slightest. I think the quality of our games is as good or better than the arcade stuff from Ocean or US Gold, but I don't see why we should charge five times more than we have to for it. We'd rather sell as many games as possible at a low price instead. You have to believe in what you're doing.

"At one point we were selling Amiga games at £4.99 and that was really lower than we could afford, but now we're at £7.99 it's a comfortable price point. We can still afford to do a two disk game like *Miami Chase* and put it out for less than ten quid. Apart from MicroProse we're the least pirated software house around, and I think one big reason for that is that we charge prices that most people can afford."
David Darling

"We've experimented with 3D games lately, but they're very difficult – there are so many about, they take a lot of work to program, and developers tend to get bogged down with trying to get everything looking realistic at the expense of the gameplay. We've always been reluctant to get into that area because it's possible to get so much gameplay into a single static screen – look at *Tetris*! – that complex programming adds nothing to the fun of a game, and indeed can quite easily get in the way.

"This is a problem the full price Amiga market really used to suffer from – so many games produced were just really graphics demos, and the average Spectrum release was often just as much fun to play. I think it's changing now though, and as full price game publishers start to get back into the idea of gameplay again, we're starting to investigate things like solid 3D which we wouldn't have touched with a barge pole before."
Richard Darling

"There should be no difference whatsoever between the standard of budget games and full price stuff. The fact that a game is sold at a budget price is purely a marketing decision. I think that will become clearer as we start to produce more quality stuff on the 16-bits, with games like *Hover Sprint* and *Bubble Dizzy*. If you look at the 8-bit market our games are as good as anything anyone's doing – *Spellbound Dizzy* took five or six months to develop on the Speccy, and there hasn't been a better game this year at any price point.

"The only full price things we do now are compilation packs where we sell about five games for £24.99, but we always make sure we put a couple of brand new games on there too for value for money, maybe releasing them as stand alone products later."
Paul Ransom

"I don't see why we should charge five times more than we have to"

On Bullfrog and the Bitmaps

"As far as other 16-bit developers are concerned it's the Bitmaps I really respect for their very slick graphics, neat programming and the way they make established game styles exciting again. Though many people won't see it like that, Bullfrog are actually very similar – with *Populous* all they've done is take an established type of game, in this case the Kingdom one, and package it very slickly. When people call *Populous* original they're really missing the point."
Paul Ransom

On the challenge set by The Hit Squad

"The Hit Squad label is certainly giving the Codies a run for our money in the 16-bit budget marketplace, but we're a lot less worried about them than we were when Ocean first announced it. It's become obvious that there'll always be a market for original budget stuff too – we're not getting pushed aside by the re-releases.

"Part of what happened around the time of the Hit Squad launch was that we put our prices up from £4.99 to £7.99 to tie in with what was becoming an industry standard – the idea was that games at £7.99 would actually sell more because they'd be perceived of as of higher quality. We were in two minds as to whether it was a good idea at first, but actually it's been good news for the consumer – the higher price means we can afford to spend more time and effort on our original 16-bit stuff."
Paul Ransom

On the idea of imitating successful full price games

"To be honest we've never really thought about it. It's true that we could spend our time doing cheaper, B-movie versions of successful games – in the same way as once a film like Pretty Woman is successful lots of people go out and make similar films – but we haven't ever really drummed up the enthusiasm for it. Programmers are proud people and wouldn't really fancy it in our experience – it's a bit sad to think we might be spending all our time doing that sort of thing really.

"The thing is, games like *Sim City* or *Populous* were examples of good games design, not slick programming. If we wanted to do a *Populous* rip off we no →

On your left, laydees and gennlemen, the evil wizard Zaks (boo!) and on the right (yay!) your hero and mine, Dizzy! Sock it to 'im, Diz!

doubt could, but we'd be hard pushed finding people who'd want to do it. Programmers tend to be show offs who want to say 'Look what I can do!' with their games – they wouldn't fancy the idea of simply copying someone else."
Paul Ransom

On making money

"Yes, we've made some. I've just bought a new four wheel drive Porsche which is one of the nice things you can do with it. We're turning over about £3.5 million at the moment, but I really think we could be a much, much bigger company in a few years time. We've only just had our fifth birthday, remember – we've got a long way to go yet."
David Darling

On the importance of Amiga game sales

"They're obviously very important – 8-bit won't last forever, and while at the moment our 16-bit stuff accounts for 35 percent of the company's turnover, the bulk of that is Amiga. I suppose I'm surprised that it isn't more important. It's taken a long time to grow."
David Darling

On game design

"I still have a lot to do with actual game design. *Big Nose The Caveman* – he's in a console game at the moment, but will filter down to the Amiga no doubt – is one of mine, for instance. He came, as most of them do, out of a couple of casual conversations and the idea just stuck.

"The big problem is in knowing where to stop with a character – if you make him too jokey the whole product is perceived of as a joke. One idea I'm considering at the moment is whether to have Bignose's nose grow each time he sniffs a flower until it reaches such size it becomes a giant smart bomb he can use to blow everyone off screen. I'm unsure as to whether this will work or simply look stupid – we're going to try it out, and if it looks funny we'll probably run with it. What we don't want is for it to look too disgusting! The English and Japanese tend to like toilet humour, but the Americans don't, so we always have to be careful we're not going to turn them off with some of our jokes."
David Darling

"Some of the games we've developed for the American NES market will be coming to the Amiga in the first half of next year. We'd be foolish not to bring them over really – as cartridges cost $10/20 just to manufacture it's become that much more important to spend a lot of time and money on the development of the games we put onto them, and because of that we've come up with some of our strongest games recently. *Micro Machines*, our table top car racing game, where all the courses are set around rooms in a house, will be converted certainly. It's based on a popular range of toy cars in the States, but since they're not so well known in this country I think the game will be judged more on its own merits.

"*Big Nose The Caveman* is another one we'll definitely convert – we haven't started it yet, but the exploration/adventure nature of it will be ideal for the home computers."
Richard Darling

"The trick is in adding elements to keep the character interesting"

On planning a new character

"We hardly do any planning, to be honest. It's amazing how much happens with very little worked out before hand. What matters is having generally good judgement and being able to make decent, sensible decisions on the spot.

Richard D – Research Director, console supremo and now – would you believe? – father!

"One thing you've got to recognise is where you're going wrong and put it right. With CJ the elephant say, one of our more recent characters, the first game packaging depicted him as a fairly normal cartoon elephant, with grey skin, lots of wrinkles and so on. The minute that came out I knew it was wrong – he should be a much younger and more innocent character – so for the second game we've had him drawn completely differently, with smooth blue baby-like skin, big wide eyes and so on. Now he's much more Mickey Mouse. The trick is to keep adding elements and improving them to keep the character more interesting each time."
David Darling

On printing your own quotes on the back of boxes

"Well, the thing is that if we've got a magazine quote we'd rather use that, but it's always good to get something on the back of the box, so we don't mind doing it ourselves if need be. We just used to mix the same words around in a different order to get a quote that sounded good, and yes, sometimes even we thought they were a bit over the top! I remember one that said 'I'm absolutely gob-smacked! It's the best game I've ever played!' or something which was a bit ridiculous."
David Darling

On the general perception of Code Masters

"People take us more seriously than they used to, perhaps because we specialise in original products. The computer whiz kid stories seem to have died down a bit anyway. We've had five years practice after all – we should be getting good at it all by now."
David Darling ●

AND HERE'S ANOTHER WE MADE EARLIER...

Once again, Paul Ransom explains...

Case study two: *Steg*

MONTH ONE
I really think slugs are going to be the in thing for 1992! I think people have probably had enough of egg games for a while – and anyway, Steg is really cute in his own right!

Actually that's not quite true. With *Rodland* and so on *everything* is cute – this game has been designed to be the antithesis of that. Throughout the game you're eating maggots and whatever, which really is rather horrible, though hopefully presented in a funny disgusting way like Fungus The Bogeyman rather than as simply nasty! We hope to attract the eight year old schoolboy mentality.

Anyway, our plan at this stage of things was simply for a Japanese-style arcade game, not unlike *Bubble Bobble* or something...

MONTH TWO
From the beginning we had this idea of a slug wearing artificial bionic legs rather like the Walkers from Empire Strikes Back. We've made sure we got this in here, but things have developed since then – there's now a jet pack sequence and all sorts too. Unlike many of our products, this one is actually being designed on screen within the boundaries of a general theme. Since it doesn't rely on puzzles and so on very much, this has turned out to be a good way to do it. The actual game structure is all to do with collecting maggots from the various levels and taking them back to the young 'uns. In fact, in many ways I think of the game as being structured in a very similar way to *Defender*. What d'you mean, you don't know what I'm talking about..?

MONTH THREE
This is where we're at now. We've got the cave level, the sewer system and the industrial section sorted out – it's the controls and the various traps we're working on. Hopefully the game will be finished in December for a New Year release, we're currently aiming for late in January. I'm personally really keen on the game and hope it will do well – I believe it will – but the industry's notoriously fickle. We'll just have to wait and see...

5 GAME PACK
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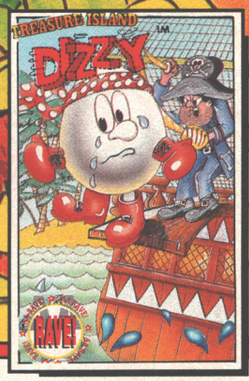

"It's spookily addictive and it's fantastically presented" - Rich Pelley Future Publishing

Dizzy's Treasure Island is brilliant, it's like a real cartoon with amazing gameplay!!

"Mindblowingly addictive and truly great!" - Brian Sharp Games X Magazine

"A Sure Fire winner for the Codies. A SMASH!" Amiga Format

"Fast Food is a classic game Absolutely brilliant" ZZap Magazine

CODEMASTERS

AMIGA screen shots shown. 8-bit versions feature "DIZZY" instead of "KWIK SNAX"

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If you can't get any further in any of these games and would like us to give hints & tips on how to solve all the puzzles just phone the numbers below. Please don't phone unless you are really stuck and make sure you get permission from the person who pays the phone bill first! Calls costs 36p per minute during off peak time and 48p per minute at all other times.

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SLIGHTLY MAGIC	0898 555 050
SEYMOUR IN HOLLYWOOD	0898 555 010
SPIKE IN TRANSYLVANIA	0898 555 105

GAME REVIEWS CONTINUED

Shoot-'em-ups, platformers, puzzlers, FRPs – whatever your tastes, we've got plenty of games for you (you'd think it was Christmas or something...)

SUPAPLEX

Publisher: Dream Factory
Price: £25.99
Authors: Philip Jesperson, Michael Stopp
Release: Out now

***Supaplex*– classic or dodo? Look at the screen shot and judge for yourself...**

Digital Integration is a name usually associated with complex flight sim games (and looks set to remain so with the release of their *Tornado* game early next year), but with the launch of the Dream Factory label they've decided to dip their corporate toe into more arcadey waters.

The first game on the label is *Supaplex*, a *Boulder Dash* clone set inside a computer, where you guide a little Pac-Man character around mazes collecting 'Infotrons' and avoiding 'Zonks' which fall down the screen according to the laws of gravity when the supporting earth beneath them is dug away. (Gravity? Earth? Inside a computer? Never mind...)

Now, copying *Boulder Dash* isn't a crime – it's a classic game style and stands up to repeating – but when it's executed this badly questions have to be asked. After a fair enough first warm-up screen, things degenerate swiftly. The second stage is an interminable maze with nothing in it at all except the exit, which is a real yawn to trek around, then it all gets worse with ridiculously-long levels which rely heavily on you guessing the correct route to take while boulders (oops, sorry, 'Zonks') rain down on your head, making a single mistake fatal. Presentation is shoddy, confusing and insulting too, and generally this is dreadful rubbish for masochists only.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
If this is going to be typical of DI's efforts at arcade fun, they'd be better off sticking to flight sims. There are half-a-dozen PD *Boulder Dash* games better than this.
29 PERCENT

NECRONOM

Publisher: Linel
Price: £25.99
Authors: Martin Hall, James Thomas, Michael Schoegl (sound)
Release: Out now

Graphics are alrightish rather than flashy, gameplay is initially unremarkable, but – hey! – Stuart seems to like it...

32 Action-packed Levels! 11 Different Scenarios! 48 Colours On Screen! 25 End Level Guardians! 3000 Frames Of Animation! 50 Frames Per Second! 300 Different Aliens! Totally Naff Load Of Nobby Old Trainspotter Waffle On The Back Of The Box Covering Up For Frighteningly Crap And Tedious Game! We Thought! So when this *Armalyte*-style horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up actually turned out to be a seriously nippy and atmospheric blasterama with stylish graphics, quite a bit of imagination, a neat line in customised power-ups (similar to the coin-op and Mega Drive game *Hellfire*, if you're interested), reasonably groovy (albeit in a Jean-Michel Jarre kind of way) in-game music and sound, and a seriously demanding but not unfair level of difficulty, well, you can just imagine how surprised we all were.

Necronom initially looks totally uninspiring, and the next-to-useless manual doesn't help a bit when it comes to deciphering the moderately complex system of weapon customising, but switch the autofire on, give it a couple of plays, and it sneakily hooks you. (If you haven't got an autofire on your joystick, ignore this review entirely – you've got no chance.) It's very tricky, but perseverance pays dividends (unlike in *Armalyte*), and the later levels are different and pretty enough to make it worth keeping at. If you've finished R-Type II, this is your ideal next purchase.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Actually pretty damn good blaster with a nice line in presentation and a challenge to tax even zapping experts. Autofiring joysticks compulsory, though.
78 PERCENT

LORD OF THE RINGS

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £29.99
Authors: Interplay
Release: Out now

Pretty icons maybe, but the main scrolling map is also pretty - pretty blooming dull.

For most people the Lord Of The Rings books represent the birth of fantasy, so it's no surprise then that they are often the subject of computer FRPs. This latest re-telling of Tolkien's trilogy takes the form of an *Ultima*-style (ie view from above with just a hint of 3D) scrolling adventure. For the three people out there who aren't familiar with the storyline, sorry – I don't have the space here to explain it here. Go buy the books (they're actually rather good, and ideal for these long winter evenings!).

The game then. Before the main section there's a fairly whizzy (if a mite slow – yawn) introduction sequence which manages to summarize the first few chapters of the book, and includes some stirring Sergio Leone-style music into the bargain. The game itself is a largely icon-driven affair, which includes one of the neatest command systems around. In any given situation the player can simply click on a command and an audible beep signals if it's not really feasible. It's a remarkably simple and direct method, and it makes perfect sense – far better than mucking around with full sentence input or pull-down menus, that's for sure.

Visually the game is fine too. The landscape graphics are more than adequate (if not outstanding) and the little cameos which appear at the bottom are good – very reminiscent of the Lord Of The Rings animated film in fact.

Apart from a slight problem of scale, then, this would be a bit of a minor classic if it wasn't for one small thing – speed. Put simply, it hasn't got any. I know that the game is trying to recreate several thousand pages of text, but it doesn't have to be THAT slow! The lack of speed really does have to be endured to be believed, and it becomes the game's downfall. Even the most patient RPG players shouldn't have to suffer a program that seems determined to give the impression that it's going to grind to a halt at any time. It's a shame, but I guess we'll have to wait a little longer for the definitive Lord Of The Rings computer game.

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

THE BOTTOM LINE
It's been written by Tolkien enthusiasts rather than expert programmers, and it shows. There're some great ideas in there, but the game just over-stretches itself. A shame.
63 PERCENT

Oh dear, looks like FINAL

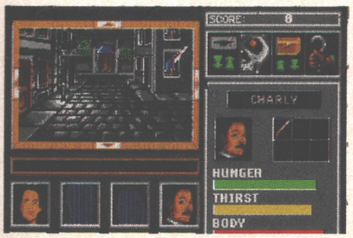
Publisher: Storm
Price: £25.99
Authors: Steve Hooper (code), Shaun McClure (graphics)
Release: Out now

Hmm. We'll ignore for a moment the rather suspect taste of a game marketed with slogans like 'come face to face

Interesting fact No1 – the boxers are actually based on Storm programmers

LORDS OF DOOM

Publisher: Starbyte
Price: £25.99
Author: Attic
Release: Out now



Looks can be deceptive. *Lords Of Doom* may look like a reasonable 3D sort of adventure romp, but steer well clear – this is the sort of game which used to give the Spectrum a bad name...

Hot on the tracks of the acute weirdness and intense foreignness of the minutes-before reviewed *Crime Time*, *Lords Of Doom* slips depressingly into my Amiga drive for reviewing. To get to the point, *Lords Of Doom* has done about as much for the software industry as Matt Bielby has for female topless mud wrestling, and about as much to enhance my appreciation of games-that-play-a-bit-like-Dungeons-and-Dragons-except-not-half-as-good-and-not-even-in-a-dungeon-anyway as, er, Matt Bielby.

Although Matt Bielby probably has problems of his own, having to access the disk every time you move somewhere new in all likely hood is not one of them. *Lords Of Doom* does though, and it's problems do not stop there. Oh, by Bielby, no.

I'll just explain briefly how the game plays at this point. Control methods should be self-explanatory from the screenshot. Er, I've no idea what exactly you are doing (the instruction don't even contain a badly translated word of English – again, this should be fixed for your versions, goodness why we keep getting sent these untranslated versions for review), but my first few goes went something along the lines of walking around a bit, picking up a key, entering a house, walking around a bit more and eventually getting killed off by some weird looking monster.

And now back to the problems. The thing is, and in all fairness, this is one of the worst games I have ever played on my Amiga. There is no where near enough room to explain why, but here are a few examples: 1) baddies are killed simply by a case of repeated mouse button pressing; 2) the weapon-select procedure is one of the most unresponsive ever; 3) there is no substance to the game (all you can do is move, pick up and use objects); 4) the graphics are crap; 5) and the sound's diabolical. I could probably come up with about 97 other reasons why not to buy it as well, but I can't be bothered. You've probably worked out not to even think about doing it already.

● *RICH PELLY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A crap adventure game which would have looked ridiculously dated three years ago. No, no, no.
16 PERCENT

DOUBLE DRAGON III – THE ROSETTA STONE

Publisher: Storm
Authors: Greg Michael (code), Ned Langman (graphics)
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

***Double Dragon III* – not so much love to hate, not even hate to love. This game is much more a case of hate to play. Get yourself *Final Fight* instead.**

What's gone wrong at Storm? *St. Dragon*, *SWIV*, *Rodland*... then *Final Blow* and this. *Double Dragon III* is essentially the same game as the first two *Double Dragon* games, with the one major difference being the addition of power-up shops. Gee, the boys at Tradewest (producers of the coin-op which this is converted from) must have been up all night thinking of that one. Even then, you don't get anything extra, because all you can buy in the power-up shop is weapons (which you could nick from the bad guys in the earlier games) or 'tricks', which are nothing other than the more impressive moves you used to get for free anyway.

What's worse, if you whack a baddie who's carrying a weapon he doesn't drop it for you to pick up, and if you're carrying a weapon and drop it, the baddies don't pick it up and use it against you either. What's more, the interactive backgrounds of the earlier games have gone for a burton too. Yes, that's right, this game is even *less* sophisticated than *Double Dragons I* and *II* (Eep! What a concept!), and a lot less fun. Simple repetition of a single move takes care of most of the baddies for the first three levels at least, and presentation (usually Storm's strong point) is dire, with 'Loading...Please Wait' and the unlikely 'Thinking...Please Wait' making depressingly regular appearances at the slightest provocation. *Final Fight* has pretty much tied up this genre on the Amiga, and *Double Dragon III* gives it about as much of a challenge as Frank Bruno's last opponent did. Total rubbish.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
It's been a bad month for gameplay fans, but this is right down there with the worst of *Final Blow*, *Barbarian II* and *Deathbringer*. Even for fans of the style, this is completely dreadful, and the worst *Double Dragon* game to date into the bargain.
29 PERCENT

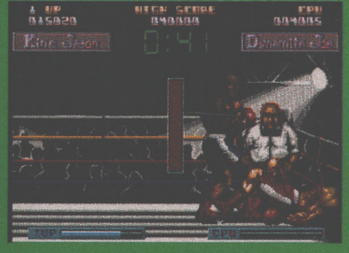
it's Christmas...

BLOW

with a mean opponent ready to inflict serious damage' and 'destroy or be destroyed – it's all in your hands' when Michael Watson's still critically ill in hospital – good taste has, after all, never been one of the strong points of the computer game industry as a whole. What's harder to forgive, or indeed understand, is why a proven and talented team like The Sales Curve should choose to make a sitting target of themselves by picking such a limited and outdated coin-op as Taito's dull and short-lived boxing bash to convert in the first place. That they've made a good job of it isn't in doubt – this game looks and plays almost identically to its arcade parent, except for the slightly puzzling loading between opponents and the rather tatty front end – but *Final Blow* was such a completely duff game in the first place that Storm never really stood a chance of turning it into an entertaining Amiga product.

The two-dimensional nature of the ring means that the only options available to the player are walk towards the opponent, walk away from him, or hit him using one of a (slightly confusing to operate) array of punches. I managed to beat the first couple of opponents (there are nine in total) on my first try by putting the autofire on and waggling the joystick completely at random, and while I'm sure this tactic wouldn't work on the tougher ones nearer the end (I got crumped by the third guy), I'm equally sure it wouldn't take very long at all to discover a tactic that *would*, meaning *Final Blow*'s lasting appeal has to rank in the 'hours' category (at best). If you really *must* have a boxing game, why not buy the Codies' *Pro Boxing Sim* instead? It's £18 cheaper, and at least you get the option to fight dirty for a bit of added 'depth'. (It's still crap, though.) At £26 from the same people that brought us the great *SWIV* and *Rodland*, this is nothing short of criminal – please Storm, what happened to your pride?

● *STUART CAMPBELL*



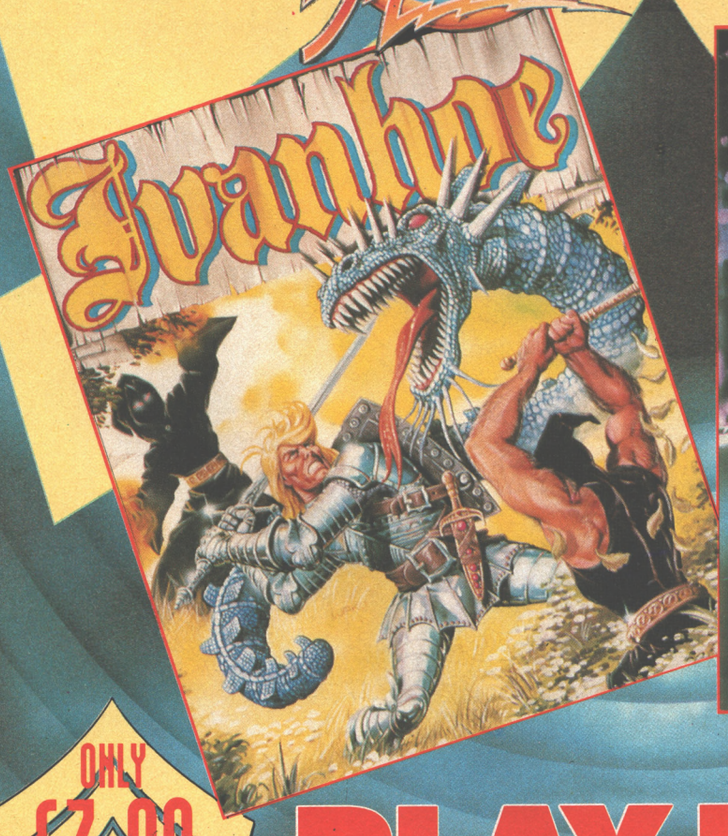
Interesting fact No2 – erm, um, well, the sprites *are* pretty damn big. Erm...

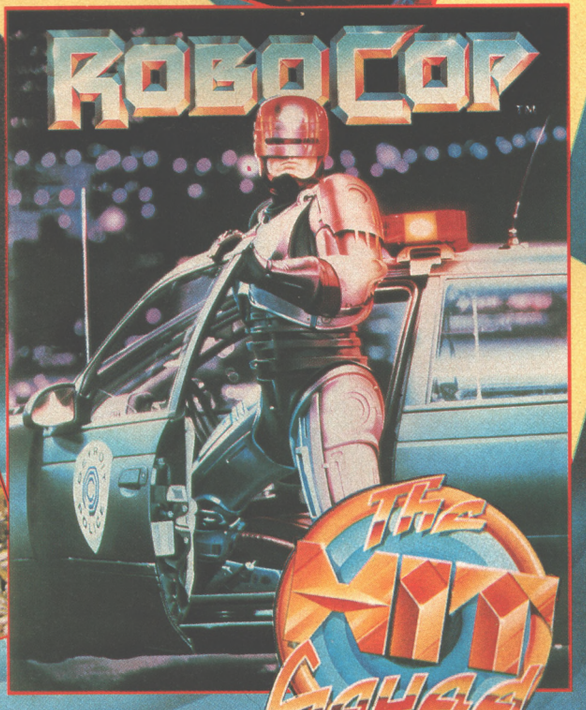
Interesting fact No3 – erm (help!), well, it *sort of* looks like the refs dancing, I s'pose...

THE BOTTOM LINE
There's no point in trying to pretend otherwise – some people out there did play and enjoy the coin-op, and for them this is an ideal opportunity to take it home and enjoy it on their Amiga. Everyone else should give it the widest of all possible berths.
33 PERCENT

TAKE ON THE SQUAD

The Hit Squad





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CRIME TIME

Publisher: Starbyte
Author: Christian Haller and Andreas Seebeck
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

If there's one thing 'plus bizarre que' French games, it's German games. Even more confusing are German games where the entirety of the instructions are in German. Such a game is *Crime Time*, creating what you might think a sizeable problem to be skilfully tackled by your cheery reviewer. But, as luck would have it, because last year I was incredibly keen to eliminate Russian, Latin, Greek and Technical Drawing (with Mr Wooley – bleeurgh) from my life if I possibly could, guess who opted to take German GSCE? Once again, the day is heroically saved. (Don't worry though – the versions you play will be in English. Hopefully).

Time for a crappy software crime – it must be Starbyte's *Crime Time*. Interactive graphics, intelligent characters, wonderful gameplay – none are to be found here.

So what happens? Well, you assume the part of a large red cabbage called Simon who has to go into space to buy a new teapot for his Granny. Or you do in my translation of the plot. But the story disk (thankfully in English) has different ideas, and from what I can gather you are in fact out to prove that you are not guilty of a nearby murder, with the cabbage and the teapot obviously appearing in more of a sub-plot. This takes place as an icon-driven arcade adventure, sort of like *Monkey Island* or *Cruise For A Corpse*. And that's the problem. *Crime Time* is far inferior to *Monkey Island* or *Cruise For A Corpse* and, as such, shares with every other clone from here onwards the fate of being slagged off into oblivion.

Technically speaking there is nothing wrong. Gameplay is deep and puzzley, the scene-setting, hand-drawn graphics are taken from interesting perspectives (Mr Wooley would approve), the digitised sound effects are, well, digitised (including a great toilet flush), and there's humour, although inevitably losing a little something on translation (such as the jokes).

But to tell the truth, it just isn't a patch on the Delphine games. And on-screen character, bits of animation, interactable graphics; none of these can be found in *Crime Time*. It's back to clicking on NORTH, SOUTHEAST icons to move about, and accomplishing tasks by selecting USE from one list then KNIFE and ON WRISTS from subsequent lists, often resulting in an infuriating "No" or "That will not be necessary" response. The dated feel of it will send shivers down even the most open minded gameplayer's spine. *Crime Time* isn't just a step but a giant leap backwards from the 1991 standard of games, and should be avoided at all costs. In fact, don't even play it for free.

● *RICH PELLEY*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A hideously dated, unoriginal adventure romp that has with little going for it. At this price? No thanks.
32 PERCENT

The World Cup may have ended, but those simulations just keep on coming...

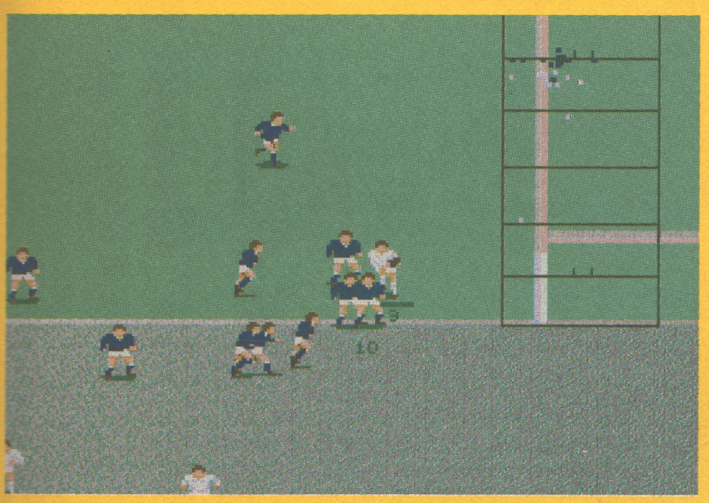
WORLD CLASS RUGBY

Publisher: Audiogenic Software Limited
Author: Denton Designs
Price: £25.99
Release Date: Out now

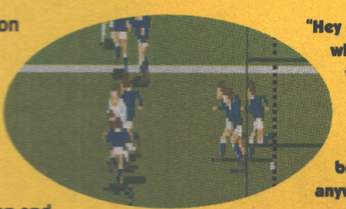
I have to say I was looking forward to this! I play (real) rugby anyway, and had found Domark's *Rugby –The World Cup* a delight, so the chance to enact another classic England/Scotland clash, this time with a different computer game, was one I couldn't miss. With the Amiga as the Jock coach, and me in charge of the Sassenachs, our match was to be a league game in the snow with a strong wind, equal skills and both offside and knock on rules applying.

It started off well too. Graphically the game is very pleasing to the eye, with clearly defined, well animated players, and some good effects including five different versions of the action replay which vary in both speed and dimension. It gives you plenty of options too – you can choose the weather conditions for your match, change the squad in your team, change their strip, play different skill levels, vary the time of match duration, control the pitch conditions, apply different rules of play and select the type of match (from World Cup, friendly or league games).

If you *do* win the ball at a line out or scrum (this is done by furiously waggling the joystick back and forth) you're given a selection of interesting but surprisingly technical moves (selected by moving the joystick up or down in the direction of the move indicated on the screen and clicking the fire button) to take advantage of. These are generally quite impressive when executed – if you can follow the direction of play – but will, I think, prove less accessible to most players than the controls of Domark's effort. Indeed, the whole approach here is of a more technically correct, less immediately playable, and generally more specialised tacticians game.



Visually great, and with authoritative attention to the rules, but it lacks aggression...



"Hey – did you see where that ball went?"
"Nope."
"Oh well, I better jump on you and break your ribs anyway."

World Class Rugby suffers from some controllability problems too – tackling, for instance, is generally a very hit and miss affair, which can prove frustrating. When in a defending situation you may find that although your players are close enough to tackle the opposition they are not allowed to do so – an arrow supposedly indicates which of your players can tackle, but in many cases I found this to be someone completely out of range, while other, closer, players had to hang around helplessly. It got even worse when the ball was bouncing free into my half and the game prevented me from picking it up, even though I had plenty of defenders just standing by waiting for the chance. Too many times the computer player scored certain tries this way, while I could do little but sit and watch.

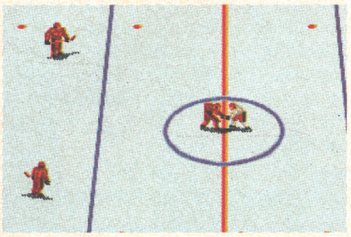
This would be unfriendly and unplayable at the best of times, but coming so soon after Domark's *Rugby – The World Cup* compounds the feeling. As I've been playing this, the highly tactical bias of the games – they're not free form in the slightest – has increasingly reminded me of American Football, not rugby, and indeed Audiogenic's Peter Calver has confirmed, "we tried to make *World Class Rugby* the rugby equivalent of *John Madden American Football*." Now *John Madden*'s isn't a technically overburdened game, but you can see the sort of thinking that's led to the game we see here. There are people who will enjoy this version – don't get me wrong – but for the vast majority of us it's got to be Domark's version every time.

● MATTHEW SQUIRES

THE BOTTOM LINE
Disappointing for anyone but serious sports tacticians. *World Class Rugby* has its virtues, but playability and accessibilty aren't two of them. My advice – go for Domark's *Kick Off*-alike instead.
63 PERCENT

FACE OFF

Publisher: Krisalis
Price: £25.99
Author: In house
Release: Out now



Sliding around after that darned puck, in the *Man Utd*-esque, but weaker, *Face Off*.

Flushed from their success with the rather fabby *Manchester United Europe*, Krisalis have taken a bold leap into the lion's den (or should that be the elephant's graveyard?) of sporting game history and given the same slick treatment to the ice hockey sim.

The gameplay in *Face Off* amounts to working out which player is actually in possession (not easy), belting the puck up the rink (one good whack usually covers the whole length), hitting it straight at the goalkeeper (the relative dimensions of the 'keeper and the goal making it hard to do anything else), then invariably scoring from the rebound. This pattern is repeated with suspicious regularity at both ends throughout the entire game, and rapidly consigns the whole thing to that other sin bin, the one where all the games you'll never play more than twice go. Still, you have to give it some brownie points for the cute way the players' skates all leave tracks on the ice. Don't you?

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Barring a stroke of unimaginable genius, ice hockey is a game destined never to really work as a computer game. This only succeeds in capturing the impossibleness of it all.

60 PERCENT

STRIKE FLEET

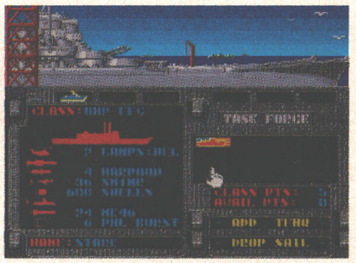
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Price: £29.99
Author: Lucasfilm
Release: Out now

There're a lot of larks to be had when somebody puts you in charge of billions of pounds worth of preposterously dangerous military hardware. And the fun just mounts up when the locations for your japes happen to be such unlovely spots as the Gulf and the Falklands. For that alone, this game sounds like it'll be a lot of fun.

Strike Fleet puts you in a position of some power. You're in control of a large fleet of ships, submarines, and choppers which on each mission must set out to foil various evil empires which have manifested themselves around the world. At the beginning you're simply in charge of one warship (though, it has to be said, this is a seriously vicious piece of kit) but as you progress you can build up huge fleets, and you'll soon be setting sail with enough tonnage to sink a small island.

Sounds like it could prove be incredibly complicated, true, but happily this isn't one of those simulations where you spend your whole time tearing around different screens checking up on silly little facts and figures. All you really need do is settle down in front of the radar/sonar screen, and wait for some idiot to fly off a few anti-shipping missiles. Then you click on a box which indicates the appropriate piece of weaponry to counter it and it's KABOOM.

Still, it's not so easy at is sounds. At first you'll spend most of your time either getting killed or simply a bit bored. Lucasfilm have taken the old maxim that war is essentially a big bore with a few highlights to heart, and there's much hanging around to be done. A speed-time option has been included, but I find these things irritatingly false and atmosphere ruining (and anyway, you tend to die pretty quickly when someone's firing an Exocet at you at 64 times their normal speed...)



A ship sim with saucy graphics – whatever next? *Strike Fleet* shows few signs of its Lucasfilm roots, but here's one...

Take out all the pompous stuff about real-time war simulation, then, and this boils down to a woefully simplistic game, supported by an impressively large manual. Once you've figured out what missiles do what, which ships are best at what and so on, it's all standard fare, and not a little old-fashioned.

It's no surprise that this is an old C64 game up-dated for the Amiga market – it looks and feels like it in every way. In fact, it makes you wonder if Lucasfilm shouldn't have spent their considerable talents on a few more worthwhile projects. If you're into sea warfare take a look at the wonderful *Silent Service II* for action, or *Harpoon* for hard-core strategy, instead.

● *COLIN CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Military hardware freaks will enjoy the number of missions, and the amazing array of hardware on offer, but discerning gamers will be disappointed by the shallow nature of gameplay. Less of a game than an excuse to play around with big ships, and not really what we've come to expect from Lucasfilm at all.

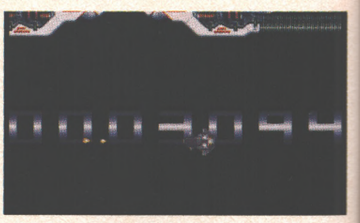
64 PERCENT

CARDIAXX

Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Author: Eclipse Design
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

'Life in the fast lane', claims the box. Myself, I live life more in the bus lane, but in the interests of higher living I thought I might as well give this a go. It's a horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up which owes more to *Defender* than it does to *R-Type*, at least in as much as the action scrolls in two directions. You hurtle at high speed through a sparse landscape until an arrow points you in the direction of a cluster of aliens. Shoot them and you win a power-up, then another arrow points you at the next lot. Lose all your energy or run out of time and the game's up. The other revolutionary feature of the game is that you can choose to have the score information take up about a quarter of the screen – novel, if pointless.

So, to the action. Frankly, this is a bit of a chore to play. Your spaceship is so sensitive to joystick movement that the slightest touch sends it flying off uncontrollably into enemies and walls. Being unable to fly your ship through unobstructed passageways simply because the game deems you not to have got that far yet is annoying and illogical,



***Cardiaxx* adds a host of new features to the genre, like, um, big scores...**

and the background graphics are too featureless to give any impression of progress. If there's a mitigating factor it's the sound, which comprises a solid and arcade-like rock soundtrack and some pleasingly illegible speech, but if you're looking for gameplay you should be looking someplace else. I'd like to say that the makers of this game should be arrested (*Cardiaxx* – arrested – geddit?), but it's not quite that bad. Then again, it's not that good either. Its heart's in the right place, but its playability hasn't turned up to the party.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Frustrating and limited gameplay makes it a bad deal for your £26. For obsessive speed junkies only.

59 PERCENT

The HG Wells vision of Victorian sci-fi

SPACE

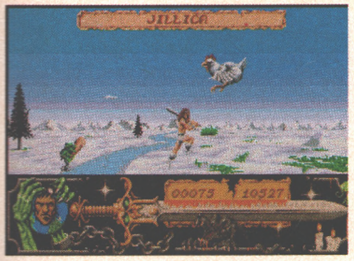
Publisher: Empire
Authors: Don Wuenschell, Steve Suhy, F.J. Lennon
Price: £30.99
Release: Out now

Cast, if you will, your minds back to issue two, when we reviewed Empire's *Mega Traveller 1*. Now substitute all the stuff about *Elite* for a bizarre plotline (one

Minimalist graphics let down the pleasingly odd Victorian role-playing of *Space 1889*.

DEATH BRINGER

Publisher: Empire
Price: £25.99
Author: George Wald
Release: Out now



Quite the most impressive parallax scrolling *ever*, but where's the game?

What did I do wrong this month? First *Barbarian II*, then *Deathbringer*, another round of meathead slashing antics set in a fantasy world with a stupid name. The Unique Selling Point of this one is the amazing parallax scrolling – each of the 36 lines of the background scrolls individually, making for the closest thing to a real-life effect yet seen. It's very impressive indeed, but it would seem it didn't leave much memory space for gameplay, because *Deathbringer* is so thin in that department it makes *Barbarian II* look like, I don't know, *Sim Earth*.

In most of these horizontally-scrolling beat-'em-ups, gameplay is a simple matter of walking for a bit, coming up against a bad guy, fighting to the death with him, walking on a bit more etc. *Deathbringer* boldly does away with the 'fighting' bit, allowing you to quite happily walk right through any of the enemies who block your way, meaning that you only have to kill the occasional one in order to keep your sword (which lusts for blood and will kill you if it isn't 'fed' regularly) happy. Now and again there are big end-of-level-type baddies to kill or simplistic dodging sequences, but otherwise that's yer lot. Doesn't sound like a lot of entertainment for a full-price game, does it? And it isn't. It looks nice – and well worth experimenting further with – but let's have a game next time, eh, Empire?

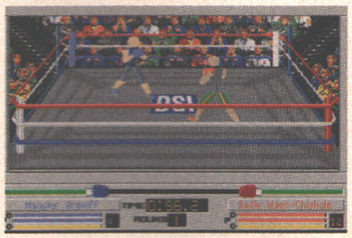
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Stunning parallax, nice touches of humour and some lovely in-game graphics generally, but absurdly shallow gameplay makes *Deathbringer* a waste of the 15 minutes you'll spend actually playing it.

54 PERCENT

4D SPORTS BOXING

Publisher: Mindscape
Author: Distinctive Software Inc
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now



Nice idea, shame about the speed, and the wobbly graphics (and so on...)

I don't mind boxing. It's dull to watch, but I see no reason why two fighters shouldn't try to kill each other for money. I *do* mind *4D Sports Boxing* though – on paper, it all looks hunky dory and interesting, but in reality it's painfully slow and much more boring than the real thing.

The authors have chosen to use arrangements of polygon shapes to represent human figures. In theory, this should allow for more realistic fighter behaviour and interesting viewpoints.

In practice it doesn't work. The boxers' movements are convincing (that said, they barely resemble human beings when static, as the detail is reduced to keep the action running at anything approaching a reasonable speed), and there's an ample supply of statistics and features (including those camera angles galore and a decent instant replay). It's been converted from a PC original, and it shows. I'm also not convinced that the vast number of available moves is a Good Thing (there are some three dozen accessible). A degree of context sensitivity would have made more sense.

My biggest bugbear is the sluggish speed at which it runs, though. It's like watching a slow motion action replay – watching, not playing, as the fighting doesn't feel particularly interactive. Nice try, but the result just doesn't cut the mustard.

● *GARY PENN*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Respect is due for the unique approach, but it's all to no avail. A comprehensive simulation with poor playability's as much use as a chocolate mouth-guard.

40 PERCENT

forms the bizarre basis for an FRP romp.

1889

Day 17 and the professor is still fighting with his bare hands – what an Englishman!

which will seem strangely familiar to fans of the Nemesis The Warlock stories in top comic 2000AD) concerning an alternative view of the Victorian age, one where the scientists of the era have also mastered the concept of space travel. Imagine yourself playing a prominent archaeologist of the time, searching for the mythical lost tomb of Tutankhamun, a quest which (for some reason) will take you out into the furthest reaches of the Solar System and beyond. Imagine that you've got the patience to hang around for seven or eight minutes of incessant disk swapping, compulsory formatting of blanks and all the rest of it, just to get started in the first place. Imagine all that, and you've pretty much got a full mental picture of *Space 1889*.

This is a game remarkably similar in more or less every way to its illustrious predecessor, except that it has a rather less friendly feel to it (the fighting system is particularly unwieldy). That doesn't stop it from being a great game, but I'm not so sure that it'll be as successful as *Mega Traveller* was in appealing to the kind of person who wouldn't normally go for this deep and involved stuff. Indeed, I'm almost completely certain that it *won't*, which is a pity – the whole idea of a pop-riveted, steam-powered Victorian view of the future, as seen in Jules Verne et al, I find bizarrely appealing, and it's a shame that this won't find a wider audience. Such is life.

Before you go though, a few moments of your time on a subject that makes me irrationally angry and was touched upon in the review above – if I want to format a blank disk to save my games on, I'll bloody well decide to do it myself! It's phenomenally annoying to fork out a load of money on a game, load it up and be all ready to get right into it, and then to have to stop and rummage around desperately for a blank disk, then wait for it to be formatted before the game will let you proceed. What if you haven't got a blank disk handy? What if you live in the Faroe Islands and you've just made your once-yearly flight to the mainland to buy a game, only to fly back and find that you can't play it because you haven't got a sodding blank? I understand, and applaud, the reasoning that allows you to back up your games in this way, but I would appreciate the choice – I'd like to be able to play off my originals if I want to.

And *Space 1889* isn't even one of the worst offenders – we've all seen multiple-disk games that won't let you play the thing off the original disks at all, insisting that you make a back-up copy of everything and use that before it'll work. If you're going to do this, it's only fair and courteous to at least mention on the packaging that everything you need to play this game isn't included in the damn box! End of rant.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Another fine game in the *Mega Traveller* mould, distinguished by a wonderfully imaginative plot, but a touch more complicated, and I think many people will find it less accessible. Getting started is a pain, too (as you may have guessed). If it's your thing, it's worth a go.

74 PERCENT

DRAGON FIGHTER

Publisher: Idea
Price: £25.99
Author: In house
Release: Out now

***Dragon Fighter* – it's exactly what it looks like, a (sort of) blaster with dragons in**

There's no-one who likes reviewing games from obscure foreign software companies more than me, that's for sure. This one's from Idea, a little-known Italian outfit whose only other recent product that springs to mind is *Swords And Galleons.* (Which I reviewed too, funnily enough. I think I'm beginning to spot a pattern here...)

At the heart of the game is a series of horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up levels, where you fly a dragon along picking off baddies and trying not to get hit by anything. At the end of each one you're given a cash reward, variable depending on how many baddies you've downed. These bits are actually quite good. Nothing special, mind you, but competently put together with smart graphics and a good dragony feel.

Then there are the 'strategy' bits – a shop and a tavern – which appear between stages and are obviously an attempt by the programmers to reassure themselves that *Dragon Fighter* is as big a game as any other. Here you can try to boost your earnings by gambling, and then fritter them away on add-ons and extra energy. I'd rather not have to bother, quite honestly.

If these spurious extras had been dropped, and a little more attention lavished on the arcade side, we might have something here. A scoring system would have helped for a start. And when I die, I like to know why, rather than just have the screen go black. Unless the dragon's standing on a platform at the time, in which case (oh dear) the game locks up and has to be turned off. (And there's a rather off-putting odour lingering in the box, for some reason). In the face of all this, the scrolling aspect looks decidedly limp and the whole game nosedives into a black hole of mediocrity.

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Slick but insubstantial. Clifford wouldn't be impressed.
56 PERCENT

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

Publisher: Kingsoft (Digital Marketing International)
Price: £25.99
Author:
Release date: Out now

Cute graphics – you can't deny this Hagar looks exactly as an animated one should

Hagar the Horrible, the 'loveable' comic-strip Viking best known for his daily appearances on the back page of The Sun newspaper, is obviously a bit of an international superstar – why else would this game be published by the German Kingsoft? (Indeed, why else would my review copy come in German – something I'm assured will be corrected before release! – making reviewing the thing such an interesting challenge?). Still, it makes little difference – language forms no real barrier when what you're playing's basically a platform arcade adventure. All I really missed out on was the witty interchange between our hero and his grouchy frau Helga, but I'm sure it was all suitably hilarious stuff.

Anyway, to the game. During the intro sequence we find the gormless looking Hagar as hen-pecked as ever – unless he successfully retrieves a selection of items Helga wants he'll be sent to the Vikings' version of Coventry without any dinner. Thus you, as Hagar, are launched into a series of platform quests for suitable pressies, a mission which brings you into conflict with witches, crows, foreign barbarians, mermaids and other Viking 'types'. There are various countries to visit – each with its own distinctive graphics – though you have to do them in the correct order.

And so onto the platform game proper. The graphics are nice and colourful, and *Hagar* does look like *Hagar*, but this really is second, or even third, division stuff. It's all reasonably varied, there are plenty of enemies to overcome, lots of beer and food to scoff and so on, but in both game design and technical ability we're seeing better cartoon licence stuff from the likes of Hi-Tec every month. Not a terrible game exactly, but one which the existence of a budget market renders more or less pointless.

● *MATTHEW SQUIRES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Enjoyable enough platform fun, but we've seen a lot better at a lot cheaper
65 PERCENT

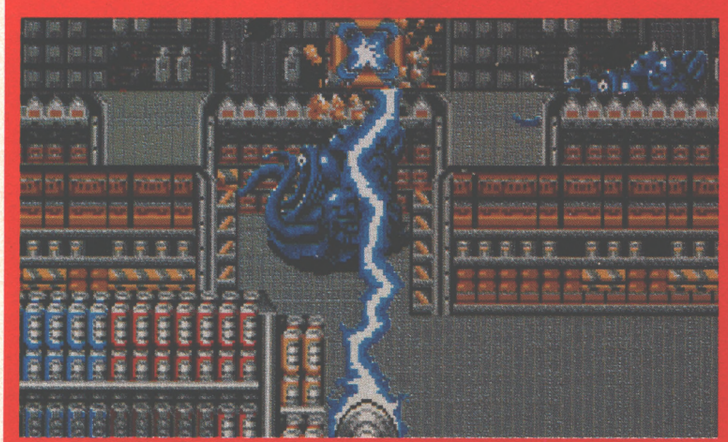
Oh dear, it's Christmas (part two)...

ALIEN STORM

Publisher: US Gold
Programmers: Tiertex
Price: £25.99
Availability: Out now

Do you believe in reincarnation? Well, the time is the future – or could it be the set of some 1950s sci-fi B-movie? – and what we have here are Gillius Thunderhead, Tyris Flare and Axe Battler strutting their stuff once again. Either them or their grandchildren. *Alien Storm* is *Golden Axe* revisited, there's no getting around it.

At least, that's the idea.



Akakakakakakakakakakakaka...etc. Most aliens don't listen to reason, so when you're enlisted to help de-alien a shop, just jam your gun onto autofire and pray...

Unfortunately, in the process of swapping goblins for slime-monsters, axes for flame-throwers and loin-cloths for laser-resistant shell-suits, something's gone missing. In Superman III when Gus Gorman attempts to make Kryptonite, he has the formula exactly right except for one crucial ingredient – as a result, the fruit of his labours doesn't quite work and Superman gets nasty.

It's the same with *Alien Storm.* Unfortunately the elusive ingredient X here is the gameplay. The result? Well, it's nasty too – a tedious hacking game that's certainly no superhero. There's none of the gung-ho hook of *Golden Axe*, revealing a very shallow game underneath the glossy graphics.

So how does it all work? Well, as in *Axe* you chose to play one of three different warriors (player two can join in the ruck allowing two characters on screen at once), each equipped with an individual weapon. It's your sorry lot to plod through six levels of slithering, oozing and scuttling aliens – the action is in forced 3D, allowing your player to walk around or somersault over the bad guys – simply, erm, killing them all.

Karla flies through the air with the greatest of ease, but she can't progress to the next skirmish until she's disposed of that, er, 'snail' (?) and his chum.

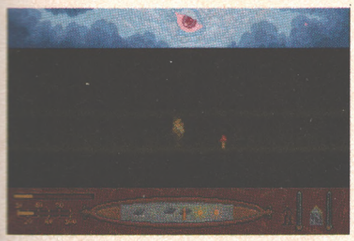
As you make your slow but inevitable progress through the game, different formations of alien hard-nuts waddle onto the screen. Annihilate the whole gang (a brawlish business that usually degenerates into merely facing off with a bug-eyed internal organ of some description and pummeling the fire button through the floor) and a 'Go!' message is flashed in the top righthand corner. Your character walks forward another ten yards, the background scrolls to keep up, and the next bunch of mutated trick-or-treaters are thrown into the lion's den.

And that's it really. Every now and then a sub-plot level rears its ugly head – for example, you may well find yourself summoned to do a rentokill job in one of the buildings en route, the action now taking an *Operation Wolf* view point as the aliens pop up from behind shelves and inch their way towards you – but the vast bulk of the game is this rather limited scrolling beat-'em-up. Before too long, the level will suddenly finish and the whirr-clunk of your disk drive tells you that yes, there really is yet more of the same. The whole business is really rather simple.

Technically, *Alien Storm* is fairly

MAGIC GARDEN

Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Author: Visionaries International
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now



Grobble the gnome stands in one of the tunnels underneath the *Magic Garden*

Oh dear. I don't know where to start with this one. It's certainly weird – what else can you say about a game starring a gnome running around inside a walled Victorian garden? – and (erm) original, but actually coming up with any useful criticism is going to be slightly tricky. From the sweeter-than-sweet subject matter, you'd initially think it was aimed at pretty young kids (of a ginger-beer drinking, Enid Blyton-reading, don't-really-exist-anymore variety), but having played the game I'm not so sure. I think it's actually more likely to be appreciated by Fairport Convention-listening middle aged hippie-types (the sort of people you always imagined playing Speccy text adventures with names like *Bulbo And The Lizard King*) – them, or simply people with very strange taste in games indeed.

Let's face it then – most of us simply aren't going to get interested in this at all. For those who are intrigued by the chance to play an animated garden gnome tending to a, well, 'magic' garden though, the story goes something like this. First things first – the whole game is set in said Victorian style walled garden, with a pond, a lawn, a shed, a greenhouse, some flower beds and, um, that's about it.

The only times you ever leave it are for the odd excursion into a tunnel system set underneath – which isn't surprising really, because the plot has it that the character you play, Grobble the gnome, has been trapped in this self-same garden. The only way he can ever leave is by impressing the Gnome King (the giant eye you see at the top of the screen) that he's now a reformed and responsible character, something he does by tidying up and generally keeping in order this rather annoying garden. Annoying? Well, turn your back for a second and roof tiles will fall from the shed, grass will grow, and flowers (!), fish (!!) and naughty gnomes will start running around the place, messing everything up.

Effectively, then, it's a management game, necessitating mucho running about, using of tools (our gnome chum has a coat full of pockets where he keeps a selection of seeds, spades, ladders, keys and other useful objects) and balancing of priorities as our hero battles against the odds to keep the place in order – not unlike a simplified, horticultural *Sim City* or *Utopia*, in fact. A percentage bar at the bottom of the screen shows how well you're doing efficiency-wise – if you do everything right the bar fills up and you've finished the game, but if it slips right down to zero the Gnome King will set to frying you with lightning bolts (it's much like the popularity rating thingie in *Sim City*).

Yes, yes, I'm sure you're asking – but is it any good? Well, I don't really know how to answer this one. Some people seem to have got quite into it ('individual' and 'humorously logical' are words I've heard bandied about) but for the life of me I can't really see how – you need a stronger stomach than mine to stand the intrinsic tweeness of the whole exercise for starters, while the sloppy overuse of disk accessing can annoy. For most of us, the basic game idea, strange though it is, could have worked with larger, brighter graphics, an extended game area, a smattering of shoot-'em-up elements and a Codies-style £8.99 price point. (But then it would have been just another Codies game, not this bizarre Holly Hobby thing). As it stands it's simply an oddity, and – for me at any rate – not a particularly entertaining one at that.

● ***MATT BIELBY***

THE BOTTOM LINE
Odd garden management game coming across as a sort of twee Sim City (with gnomes). Not exactly a total disaster by any means, but very much a specialist taste.
55 PERCENT

Stop posing and get on with it! Gordon brandishes his flame-thrower with aplomb, but can you see the aliens quaking? Well, no more than they normally would...

ALIEN STORM

Publisher: Electronic Zoo
Author: Visionaries International
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

respectable. The graphics are both large and colourful, and on the whole they move smoothly. The soundtrack cuts a natty little number and (on paper) there's little missing: special weapons; forced 3D; three characters; two-player action; the lot. But lots of parts added together don't necessarily make a whole, and as a game *Alien Storm* comes across as sorely lacking. Very dull stuff on the whole.

● ***NEIL WEST***

THE BOTTOM LINE
A tedious *Golden Axe* clone lacking originality and gameplay. OK, the graphics look great, and the overall presentation is in fact very slick. But fighting the aliens is too brawlish and haphazard – the novelty soon wears off. Treat this game as you would a gun-toting alien oozing down the street...
44 PERCENT

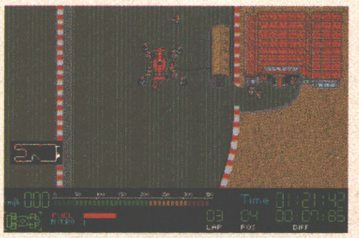
CHAMPION DRIVER

Publisher: Idea
Price: £25.99
Author: Luca Podesta, Roberto Podesta (graphics), Rene Gazzoldi (music)
Release: Out now

Following the recent glut of driving games (*F1 Grand Prix, OutRun Europa, Lotus 2* etc), all that we've been missing is a *Nitro*-style overhead-view scroller to complete the set, and now that gap's been filled by *Champion Driver*.

Set on 50 Grand Prix tracks from around the world, the game starts you off as a go-kart racer, with the objective of rising through five categories to become a Formula One star. This you do by the simple expedient of beating a variety of computer-controlled cars in 10 three-lap races per level, the only complication involved being a limited fuel tank, necessitating fairly frequent trips to the pits if you're not going to be left sitting embarrassingly in the middle of the track at a complete standstill.

In a similar vein to *Nitro* and *Hot Rod*, you can also use prize money to buy improvements for your vehicle (bigger engine, better tyres, the usual kind of thing), which will help you counter the increased speed and improved opposition of the later levels.



It's a great racing game, oh no it isn't, oh yes it is, oh no it isn't (etc etc etc).

The first thing you notice in *Champion Driver* – and the importance of this can't be overstated – is the quite staggeringly bad copy protection system. This kind of thing makes a game a real chore to get into and can seriously affect your feelings towards it before you even play – you find yourself thinking 'Sod this for entertainment, who do they think they are anyway, putting a poor player through such torment?' Well, that's what it does to me, anyway. If I hadn't had to review it, I would have got as far as the protection and thrown the whole thing away in disgust. I don't fork out £26 on *any* product to be treated like this, and neither should anyone else.

But I'm digressing rather wildly. Once past the copy protection, what you find is an unexpectedly great little racing game with attractively understated graphics and a perfect handling feel. From the start screen you can either jump straight into the game proper, or practice a single race on one of the four harder levels – a clever and effective way of maintaining interest by way of a tempting carrot, where otherwise you might get a bit dispirited by lack of success. Here, you can always get a tantalising glimpse of what it is you're striving towards.

In play the game is fast and smooth, with lots of variation in the tortuously twisting tracks and a well-judged difficulty curve. The lack of a multi-player option knocks potential lasting appeal down a bit, as does the essentially repetitive nature (especially when, unlike *Nitro* and *Hot Rod*, the graphics don't change significantly between levels), but it's demanding enough to make you work pretty damn hard to get anywhere, which should keep your interest high for a while at least. We've had (even) more arguments in the office about what mark games should be getting than usual this month, and I know for a fact that a number of people disagree with me, but I'll say it anyway – this is a highly entertaining game that I really enjoyed playing, but if you're looking for something to keep you going into next year, look elsewhere.

● ***STUART CAMPBELL***

THE BOTTOM LINE
Very fast and slick scrolling racer, brilliant fun in the short term but lacking longevity. More fun than *Supercars 2*.
75 PERCENT

100

ROBOZONE

Publisher: Image Works
Authors: Arc Developments
Price: £25.99
Release: Out now

The mix and match *Robozone*. Having ploughed through the sideways scrolling bit, and the dodgy 3D bit, it's now on to the (hurrah!) average *R-Type* bit.

Robozone is a three-part arcade game, divided into a platform section most easily compared to *The Killing Game Show*, a 3D maze section very (very) loosely similar in style to *Dungeon Master* et al, and a horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up section in the *Armalyte* vein. Now there's nothing inherently wrong with the multiple-subgames style if it's done properly (see *Batman* and, er, something-else-quite-good-like-that-which-I-can't-quite-think-of-at-the-moment, probably), but when each of the three mini games is as thin and dull as the ones found here, you really have to start asking questions about the morality of asking £26 for it all.

Everyone here has found the platform sequence tedious within 30 seconds (no, I'm not exaggerating), the middle game is simply atrocious (terrible, primitive graphics, an almost total lack of action, no gameplay to speak of at all – just trudge around a featureless maze and occasionally try to persuade the hopeless firing system to let you shoot a wandering baddie), and the last section, a fairly presentable – if a touch short – *R-Type*ish blaster, is unlikely to be reached by anyone other than the most bloody-minded, making it a bit of a waste of time.

When you look at *First Samurai*, then see this accompany it from the same company at the same price, you really do begin to wonder why the hell the full price software industry only really has the one price point. (And no, that doesn't mean that I think *First Samurai* isn't expensive enough). Then again, even as a budget game this would be pushing things a bit, but at least if it wasn't being touted at the same price as decent stuff, it would seem less of an offence against the sensibilities.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Excellent in-game music, but a tired, uneventful and repetitive game that more or less completely fails to provide any decent entertainment whatsoever after the neat front end sequence.

39 PERCENT

Psygnosis get back to basics – yes, it's shoot-'em-up time!

AMNIOS

Publisher: Psygnosis
Price: £25.99
Authors: Paul Frewin, Pete Lyon
Release: Out now

On the back of the *Amnios* box, Psygnosis advise players to forget about the plot. Okay, that's fine by me. Time to get in to some totally unbiased AP reviewing.

The game centres (quite literally) around the player's rotating craft, the ground scrolling while the ship remains in the middle of the screen. The task is a (reasonably) straightforward one – getting just a bit too clever for its own good in the power-ups system. The basic idea is that each (apparently organic) enemy planet visited must have a certain percentage of its vital organs destroyed (eyes, heart, brain etc) by good old laser or special weapons (brain damage power up for the brain, heart attack for the heart – all good tasteful stuff). These special weapons are obtained by collecting strands of DNA, depositing them in the fathership, waiting for a power-up to be generated, then collecting them again. The colour of the DNA roughly determines the type of power-up created, and there's also a human prisoner or two on each level. These must be removed from their alien guardians and taken to the safety of the fathership. The whole task is made more complex by the presence of worm-like nasties, wasps, huge bug-eyed human prison-keepers, and a lot of enemy firepower. Subsequent planets offer varies types of fleshy or plant-like surfaces, more fatherships, and a lot more bad guys. See, I told you it was simple.

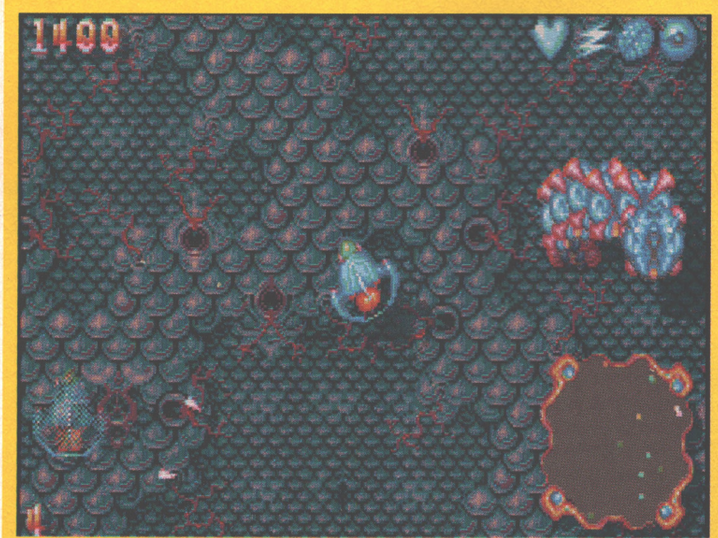
Sounds original? Well it's not. Williams made a not too dissimilar arcade game back in the early '80s by the name of *Sinistar*, and Jeff Minter gave us his homage to that classic *Defender*-esque game in the form of *Photon Storm* for Arc. So how does *Amnios* compare to these two? Well graphically its obviously well out on top. The Williams game is old and therefore the graphics are obviously crude (but nonetheless quite effective). And *Photon Storm*? Well, Jeff may be good with flashing colours and strobes, but graphics never were his strong point. So, *Amnios* takes a flying lead. And so we go to the next round – sound FX. Once again *Amnios* holds its own. Although not particularly memorable, it bleeps and grunts in all the right places, and that almost biologial element is carried through to the audio side of things quite nicely. But then we come to that difficult little area – the gameplay.

Amnios has a lot going for it. The inertia on the space ship is just right. The scrolling is beautifully smooth, and the sprites are large and well drawn. The game mechanics are quite effective, with a number of different playing strategies possible, and the long-range scanner proving more than a nice cosmetic touch. It's just that maybe the programmers have taken things a little too far. All this business about collecting DNA, taking it to mother (sorry, father) ships, and receiving power-ups for it is an interesting update on the simple collect and dump the humanoids idea, but what with these added complications and the fact that the nasties are just too large and numerous to avoid properly, the game tends to feel a little overdone for a shoot-'em-up.

When I play a blasting game, I don't really want to worry about collecting *this* object to generate *that* object to destroy *that* bad guy. It all feels a little too convoluted for what ought to be an instantly accessible zapper. And while I'm at it, those End-Of-Level Guardians are a bit sad. All they seem to do is float after the player's ship, launching a few streams of firepower and whistling dixie. I'll give 'em a B minus. Must try harder.

● *MARK RAMSHAW*

A very un-Psygnosis intro precedes the not-very-original gameplay of *Amnios*.



Swooping over the planet surface, that weird thing on the bottom right is the long-range scanner. Although big and beautiful, the graphics tend to get in the way just a little too often. That 'reflection' of the main craft shows the shield energy level.

THE BOTTOM LINE
Neat, but overly complex (and over-priced) shoot-'em-up. The graphics, despite their beauty, just get in the way a little too much. No disaster, but it could have been so much better with just a little more thought – it's actually less fun than the similar *Photon Storm*. Good for an occasional blast, nonetheless.

76 PERCENT

Knightmare

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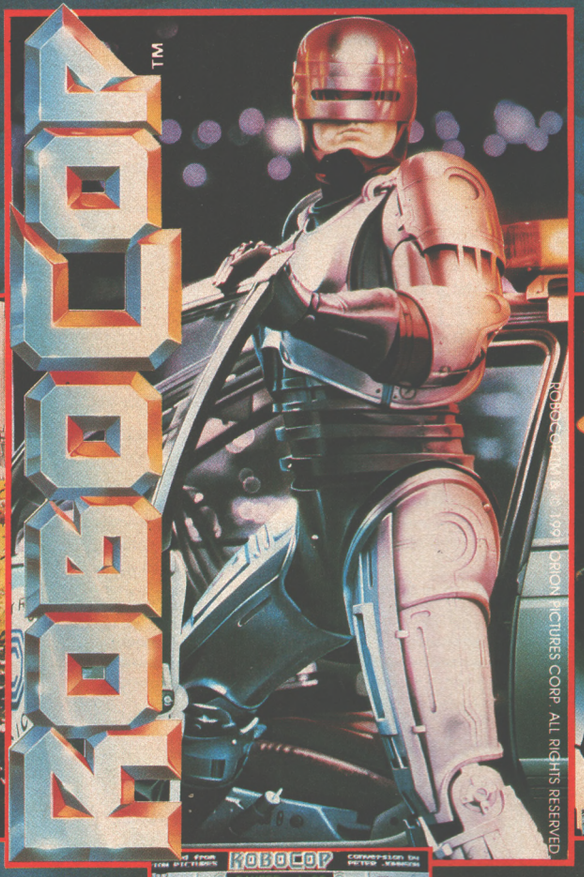

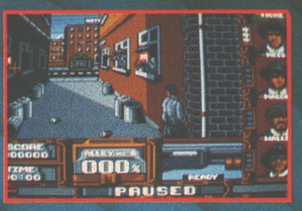

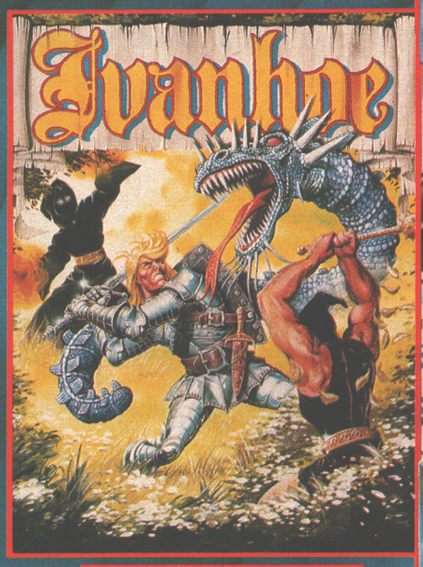

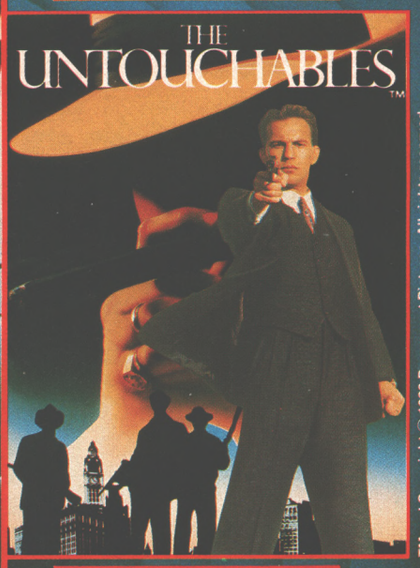

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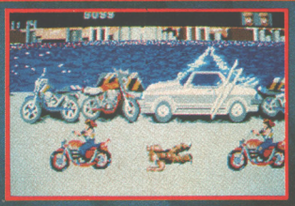

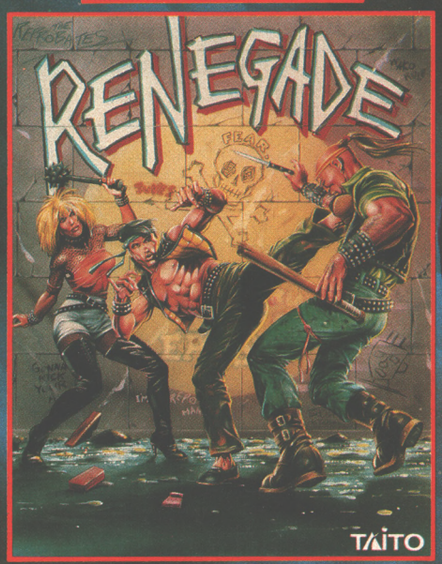

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Welcome to budget and compilation city. From the delights of Gremlin's past hits, to the utterly bizarre *Tilt*, to fantasy role-playing, to an entire collection devoted to Hanna Barbera cartoon characters(!), it's all right here...

CHASE HQ

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Yes, time to play 'Spot The Criminal' again

Coin-op driving games like this one never seen to get a very good deal on the Amiga – the poor old thing just isn't up to moving all those lovely big sprites around at the necessary speed for a decent arcade feel. Still, as both *Lotus* games and others show, you can always turn the resulting graphical simplicity to your advantage by using the free processor power to produce a game of great speed with crisp, sharp graphics and beautiful handling instead.

Which doesn't explain *Chase HQ* at all. The old 'alternating stripes for a road' effect has been employed many times in the past with some success (notably in *Continental Circus*), but here it flashes and flickers and judders, and in combination with the suspect colour choices of some levels can be genuinely quite nauseating.

The game lacks speed, droning along at a mediocre pace even with the turbo boosters employed, and without the pumping adrenalin induced by that aspect of the original, the thin and frankly boring nature of the gameplay is thrown into sharp relief. The game then consists mostly of a 'staying-on-the-road' challenge, which isn't helped by the fact that all the bends look the same, with the tighter turns only evidenced by the way that your car slides away out of control for no apparent reason in the middle of them. It's very difficult too – the later levels are next to impossible even if you use the cheat mode thoughtfully included in the box, but you're unlikely to want to bother with it for that long anyway.

● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Even if you liked the original coin-op, this is crap. Don't buy it.
44 PERCENT

AUSTERLITZ

Publisher: Mirror Image
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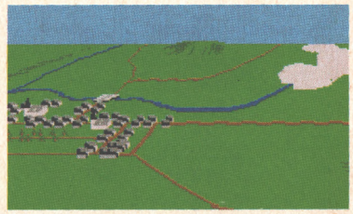
Release: Out now



One of the prettier screens in *Austerlitz*

The wargaming cognoscente will doubtless already be acquainted with *Austerlitz* and its chum *Waterloo*, which was reviewed a couple of issues ago. If you're not familiar with it, it's probably safe to say that you're better off that way. Although *Austerlitz* looks pleasantly amiable, with its 3D graphics and sophisticated parser, it's really no more layman-friendly than any other wargame.

On the plus side, the graphics reflect the game's 'removed from the action' emphasis quite nicely – orders are of the top-level strategic variety, and you needn't worry about the intricacies of head-to-head combat – and underneath is plenty of solid gameplay and historical detail. But typing in orders and then sitting around for hours on end waiting to see the results just isn't on for your average citizen. Patience is definitely called for, something which Napoleon buffs presumably have endless supplies of. They'll see this as quite a purchase, while the rest of us would be advised to keep our bargepoles firmly sheathed, and give it a heartfelt 'Not tonight Josephine' (or whatever).

● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
A quality wargame at a bargain price, but (as usual) for connoisseurs.
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CHART ATTACK

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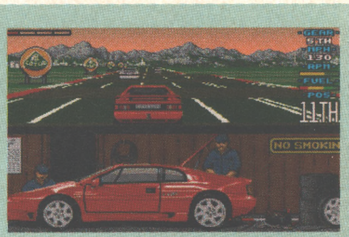
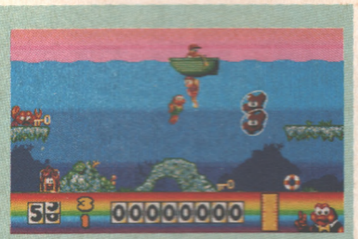


***Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge* – the game with a title so long there's no room for a**



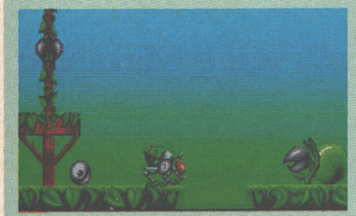
The world's best game with caged lobsters in it – the inimitable *James Pond*

A collection of four games from the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100, *Chart Attack* mixes driving action with fast-paced arcade adventuring and, er, not-so-fast-paced arcade blasting. The compilation's star is almost certainly *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge*, the superb racing game recently succeeded by a well-received sequel. For me personally, though, *Lotus 1* is the superior game, being faster, more playable and far better in two-player mode. It suffers from only using half the screen in the single-player game, but otherwise this still shows most other titles in the genre a clean pair of heels.

Millennium's fishy arcade adventure *James Pond* is a very popular game among the AMIGA POWER staff, and while I have to say I don't find it very engaging myself (it's just a touch too repetitive and 'so what?'-ish), there's no denying its extremely cute graphics, enormous playability, and general all-round sweetness. It's beautifully done, and a worthy ancestor to its superb recent sequel, *Robocod*, although you probably won't find yourself playing it much after the first couple of days.

Venus (The Flytrap) is a slow-paced and thoughtful console-esque arcade game, with lovely graphics and lots of that 'just a little bit further' compulsion. It's got a great shoot-'em-up sub-game between levels too, which ups the adrenalin level a bit to compensate for the lack of white-knuckle thrills in the main game. The nicest feature is probably the animation, which is creepily insect-like and gives *Venus* the atmosphere which makes it worth playing.

Lastly we come to *Ghouls'n' Ghosts*, a conversion of the CapCom coin-op originally released by US Gold. Gameplay-wise it's still close to the arcade game, but the primitive graphics and sound are starting to look a little dated these days. The other interesting feature is the name of the princess your bold knight has to rescue from the eponymous undead. What kind of a name is 'Hus' for a princess? A crap one, that's what. ●*STUART CAMPBELL*



The eternal confrontation – flora vs fauna – in *Venus (The Flytrap)*

Look out, it's behind you! This game's best days are too, but it's still OK

THE BOTTOM LINE
Nothing here lets the side down at all – this is a good solid compilation of reasonably varied games that'll keep you entertained for a few weeks at least. Buy it as a Christmas treat for yourself.
79 PERCENT

ALTERED BEAST

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

If you've seen the Mega Drive version of this game you might be forgiven for thinking that it's a reasonably →

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Yep, it's *Kung Fu Master* with zombies

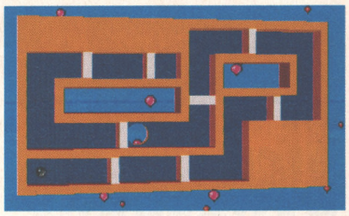
enjoyable arcade beat-'em-up thing with a few novel touches (being able to change from a human to a werewolf to a living fireball for one), and indeed you'd be right. If you'd *bought* the Mega Drive version, that is. On the Amiga, *Altered Beast* is a pale shadow of its other incarnations, with all the original gameplay intact but hampered by jerky scrolling and imprecise collision detection. While you couldn't really justify calling it awful, the game is as mediocre as they come, and while it's okay as a relic from that bygone age when 'amazing' 16-bit graphics could still blind awestruck punters to a game's other glaring deficiencies, it doesn't warrant anything more than a passing glance in 1991.
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Okay if you're really desperate for a beat-'em-up and you've already got *Final Fight*, but otherwise don't bother.
54 PERCENT

TILT

Publisher: Code Masters
Price: £7.99
Release:

Fresh from success on the 8-bits, *Tilt*



Unfortunately it's not a pinball game, but *Tilt* is reasonably damn groovy anyway

brings that classic form of entertainment, the rolling ball maze, to the Amiga in all its technicolour glory. The gameplay is about as simple as gameplay gets – get the ball from the start of the 3D maze to the end without hitting the sides or any of the deadly gates, by tilting (hence the title) the board in one of the eight joystick directions and pressing fire to momentarily open the gates. Touching anything gets the ball sent back to the start, although any gates successfully passed are removed from play, and reaching the end safely results in new, tougher maze to negotiate. And that's the lot. The game is displayed in bright, colourful solid 3D graphics which are a touch crude-looking but serve their purpose well enough, and the gameplay proves to be frustratingly addictive, although the seemingly near-infinite amount of energy your ball is endowed with removes some of the tension.

Basically *Tilt* is a lot of fun, but after the first few screens you're likely to get a bit bored – there's not an awful lot you can do with gates and eight-directional passageways in the final analysis.
● *STUART CAMPBELL*

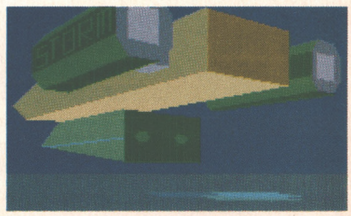
THE BOTTOM LINE
Fun and addictive reaction-tester, fair as budget but not something you'll come back to much after you've made a bit of initial progress.
73 PERCENT

VOYAGER

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

Not, perhaps, the kind of thing you usually expect to see appearing on a budget re-release label, *Voyager* is a curious *Battlezone*-inspired shoot-'em-up which first slipped out in a low-profile kind of way a few years ago, and has since appeared on a great compilation with *IK+* and *R-Type*. Now it's available on its own for eight quid, and it isn't a bad deal at all.

Eerily atmospheric, and slickly presented with a pretty scene-setting intro



The atmospheric intro of *Voyager* is impressive, but the game's pure zap fun

sequence, the game rapidly throws off any pretensions of cleverness and settles down into a pretty straightforward blasting experience. There's a big handful of keys to get to grips with, but most of the time you'll get by quite happily with the joystick, and mental processes don't really intrude on the action to any extent whatsoever. This is a sedate but gripping shoot-'em-up for the slightly more thoughtful player, and a big pat on the back should go The Hit Squad's way for giving it an outing on a label more often known for re-runs of dodgy licence games (oops, that's me in trouble again). Encourage them a bit, give this a try. ● *STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Initial impressions of a pretty dull arcade adventureish thing quickly give way to an enjoyable and highly atmospheric *Battlezone*-type blaster with lots going for it.
80 PERCENT

THE HI-TEC HANNA BARBERA CARTOON CHARACTER COLLECTION

Publisher: Hi-Tec
Price: £19.99
Release: Out now

Okay, riddle fans, guess, if you can, what kind of games are to be found on this collection. Flight sims? Nope. Coin-op beat-'em-up conversions? Uh-uh. Hanna-Barbera cartoon character licenses? Got it in one, Sherlock.

The four games collected on the one disk of this package vary wildly from the groovy to the ghastly, so here's a quick rundown from top to bottom. *Yogi's Great Escape* is a horizontally-scrolling platformer with charming graphics and *Mario*-tinged gameplay that's acceptably involving and addictive, in that you do find yourself seized by the urge to see just a little bit more. Extremely playable and good simple fun, it's by far the best game here.

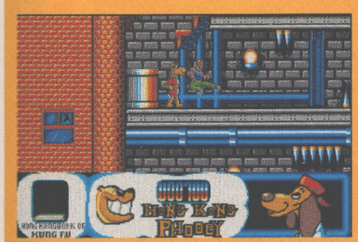
A little further down the ladder we find *Hong Kong Phooey*, another platforms-and-ladders job with quite a bit in common with last month's 90 percent rated *Scooby and Scrappy* game. It's a much cruder version of it, without the gorgeous graphics, parallax scrolling and slick playability, but it's still enjoyable, and some nice bits of presentation and something approaching the proper music help it retain a feel of the cult cartoon. Not too bad at all.

Ruff And Reddy (In The Space Adventure) keeps up the platform count with an embarrassingly straightforward effort which looks like it was programmed with some sort of game construction kit. Animation is minimal, the screens flick instead of scrolling (and the positions of all the enemies reset when you leave the screen, making clever timing impossible and unnecessary) and Ruff appears to play no part in the game at all. Rubbish, quite frankly.

Finally, we have *Top Cat (In Beverly Hills Cats)*, which was reviewed by yours truly in issue five, scoring a rather generous 46 percent. It hasn't improved any. An arcade adventure very 8-bit in feel, it's illogical, lazily designed, unimpressively programmed and generally so workmanlike that it's just intensely depressing to play. This is the kind of thing that gives budget games a bad name.

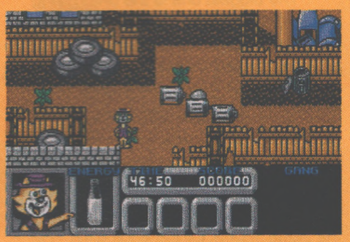
So, in time-honoured summing-up tradition, this compilation comprises one really good game, one okayish one, and a pair of real duffers. You'd do much better to get *Yogi's Great Escape* by itself and buy *Hong Kong Phooey* if you're feeling overburdened with cash this month and you've already got *Scooby And Scrappy Doo*. When you consider that the four games would only have cost £28 in the first place, this isn't the best value compilation ever.
●*STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Uninspired collection of titles with little to recommend it, especially when you think that you could get the *Rainbow Collection* for the same price. Some fun to be had, but not much.
59 PERCENT



"Is it Henry, the mild-mannered janitor?" Well, yes, it is, basically.

An anorexic-looking Yogi searches desperately for 'pickernick' baskets

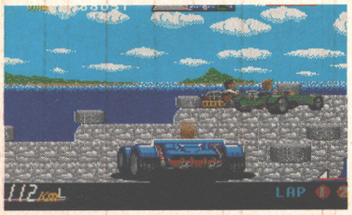


TC (as his best friends get to call him) ponders perpetual motion in dustbins

This game's certainly a bit Ruff – in fact it's Reddy for the dumper! (Sorry)

POWER DRIFT

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now



Take advantage of this quiet moment – you won't see it this relaxed again

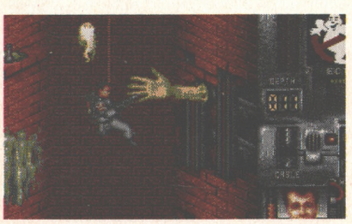
Programmed by *Super Hang-On* hero ZZKJ, *Power Drift* represented one of the most ambitious attempts at a coin-op version ever seen on the Amiga. The huge, fast-moving, detailed graphics of the coin-op were thought by many to be impossible to port across, and so it transpired. While the Amiga game kept the speed of the arcade it was at the expense of smoothness, and the courses catapulted the player around like a pinball, with very little in the way of clues as to where the next corner was coming from.

Despite this, the game was still entertaining in a frustrating kind of way, but these days it all looks just a little too Heath Robinson. Oddly, the conversion retains much of the arcade's feel, despite being nothing much like it in most respects, and while it would be laughed out of court as a modern full-pricer, it's not a bad buy at budget price at all. ●*STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Dated and technically duff racer that somehow manages to still be quite good fun. Don't expect too much, and you won't be disappointed.
69 PERCENT

GHOST BUSTERS II

Publisher: The Hit Squad
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now



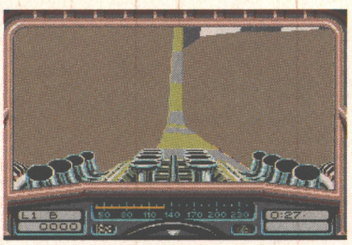
It shouldn't need a gun to persuade you to keep your hands off this game

We featured this in the 'Oh Dear' column in issue two, so it shouldn't take the more alert among you long to figure out that it's not much cop. Three incredibly thin sub-games are executed with a passable level of competence, but the design is so lame and uninspired that very few players are likely to bother getting as far as the third one. Lovely graphics and sampled music make this one look like quite a professional effort, but it's a classic case of all style and no content. Intrusive and annoying disk-swapping puts the tin lid on the whole thing, and if you still go out and buy this game after everything everyone's said about it, then you deserve everything you get. Which, in this case, won't be very much.
●*STUART CAMPBELL*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Dreadful film licence which epitomises everything that's wrong with the genre. Sell your body to medical science *while you're still using it* rather than fork out any cash on this lump of unforgivable tosh.
11 PERCENT

STUNT CAR RACER

Publisher: Kixx
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now



Okay, okay, so it doesn't look all that impressive, but give it a play

In which Kixx up the stakes in the budget re-release market with the first in a series of old MicroProse games which are among the most successful and popular in the Amiga's history. *Stunt Car Racer* probably represents the zenith of the company's short-lived arcade game period, a stunning driving game set on a series of rollercoaster-like courses which occupies the No.10 slot in the AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100. The Ed loves it more than life itself, and it's certainly in possession of an addictive hook that's as big as the ridiculousness of the whole idea, but there are flaws which drag it down a touch too.

The biggest one is the unforgiving nature of the gameplay – make one mistake and your car plunges off the edge of the track, and it takes so long for it to be winched back on that any chance of beating the computer opponent has completely disappeared. There's also the fact that there's only a dozen tracks, and once you've mastered them all there's very little incentive to continue playing. All the same, if only for the originality, playability, and the breathtaking feel of insane danger when you plunge off the 'ski-jump', this is a game that you'd be a fool to miss for a mere eight quid.
●*STUART CAMPBELL*

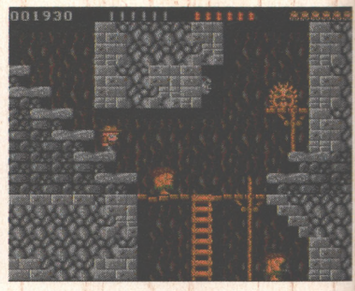
THE BOTTOM LINE
A bit limited, and a lot more fun in two-player mode than with one player, but still a great and original game. More than enough fun for the money.
88 PERCENT

RICK DANGEROUS

Publisher: Kixx
Price: £7.99
Release: Out now

The time is going to come when the entire AMIGA POWER All-Time Top 100 is available on a budget label. At the last count, 45 of said classics are out on budget, compilation or with back issues of various magazines, and now the list includes the No 71. Er, hurrah!

Rick Dangerous is, to me, one of the most mystifying successes ever – a hugely popular platforms-and-ladders escapade which is actually nothing more than an elaborate memory test. You trek through a couple of screens, get killed by a spike or bullet which appears from out of nowhere without warning, get sent back half-a-dozen screens, and do it all over again until you work out the timing. Successfully negotiate one such trap and the next one's just a ladder's leap away, giving you another chance to get killed by something you couldn't have foreseen, and so it goes until you've reached, been killed by, worked out, and remembered every trick, at which point you've completed the thing. While some of the puzzles are reasonably intriguing, *Rick Dangerous* stretches the definition of the word 'game' just beyond the limit of acceptability as far as I'm concerned. It's initially addictive, but after a few plays you realise that it's the same all the way through, and addiction swiftly turns to total frustration, and then the worst sin of all. This game bores me.
●*STUART CAMPBELL*



'Dangerous' only in the sense that you'll get so frustrated by it you're in danger of a heart attack, that's tricky *Ricky D.*

THE BOTTOM LINE
Tedious, repetitive, and annoying – it's about time the *Rick Dangerous* myth was laid to rest. To be fair, it's a passable budget game, but if you want a budget platformer, why not buy *Scooby And Scrappy Doo* instead? It's in a different class.
63 PERCENT

BLOODWYCH

Publisher: Mirror Image
Price: £9.99
Release: Out now

They don't call me Jonathan 'Short Straw' Davies for nothing. Luckily in this case I think it's merely a case of saying something like: "*Bloodwych* is virtually identical to *Dungeon Master*, only with a simultaneous two player option, and as it got really good reviews as a full-pricer it's got to be a bit of a star buy at this price".

So, here we go. *Bloodwych* is virtually identical to *Dungeon Master*, except two people can play at once, getting half the screen each. That means the graphics are a bit squashed up, but it's corking good fun. Being so similar to *Dungeon Master* means lots of role-playing, with dungeons to explore, spells to cast, characters to recruit into your party, puzzles to solve, baddies to kill, animated(ish) 3D graphics to goggle at and larks aplenty to be had by all. Although the presentation doesn't exactly sparkle, and some text is a little hard to read at times, everything works as it should. Just as well, as there's an awful lot of it.

Being a role-playing game means that a fair degree of concentration and (dare I say) strategy is involved, but, if you're prepared to commit the necessary braincells, there's easily a tenner's worth of entertainment here.
● *JONATHAN DAVIES*

THE BOTTOM LINE
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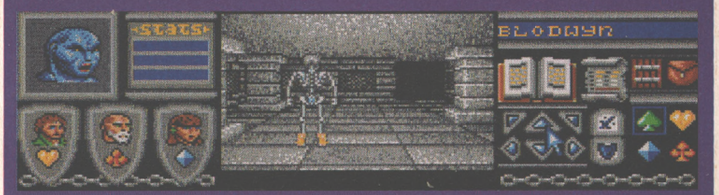

It may not quite match up to the latest role-player, but just dig that crazy price!

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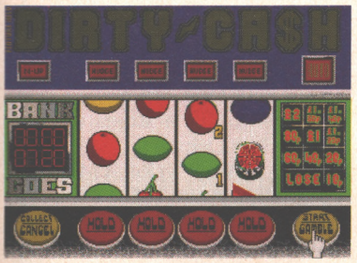
PD

Another single page this month, PD fans, what with the pressure on space around Christmas and all that, but luckily(?) we hardly had any PD software to review anyway. Hopefully someone will send us some in the New Year. Your guide, as ever, is Mr Stuart Campbell...

RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

DIRTY CASH
(Deja Vu)



***Dirty Cash* – yep, it's another chance to win no money at all on a fruit machine**

Like *Magic Forest* (reviewed over on the right), this is an *AMOS* licenceware game and not proper PD at all. It's a fruit machine simulator, and as such it does all the things you'd expect a fruit machine simulator to do – nudges, hold, gambles, features and so on. The machine (it's a four-reel model, something you don't see many of) is a couple of screens high (it scrolls to show the relevant bit at any given time), which allows a lot of detail to be packed in, and generally everything works perfectly well. As ever, the main bugbear is the sheer pointlessness of it all – why play a fruit machine if you can't win any money? If that doesn't bother you though, you'll get hours of fun out of this.

VERDICT: Hey, look, what else is there to say about a fruit machine game? Not remarkable or especially interesting in any way, but fine for what it is. ★★★

MISSION X
(NBS)

It's tribute time again in the PD column, with another *SWIV* lookalike. Hurrah!

From the same people who brought you the *SWIV* 'tribute' *Raid* (reviewed in the PD column in issue six), comes a follow-up in much the same vein – indeed, it's subtitled *Raid II*. The graphics and gameplay are pretty indistinguishable from before style-wise, but it's not as frustratingly difficult and there's a funny little front end screen which takes the mickey out of the commercial game in a touchingly respectful kind of way. The decreased difficulty makes for a far more playable game, and it looks lovely for PD too. If you liked *Air Ace II* (a very popular game from our issue six coverdisk), you'll love this, because it's more of the same, but better. It's tough and addictive and it's yours for almost no money at all.
A bargain? I think so.

VERDICT: Incredibly similar to both *SWIV* and the first *Raid*, but very playable and good fun. The best *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit* game to date, and a PD must. ★★★★★

LAZERZONE
(17 Bit)

What's going on in Amiga *Laserzone*? Even the VIC-20 version had more colour in it than this does – and it needs one meg!

Good grief, it's yet another ancient Jeff Minter 8-bit game converted for the Amiga. This was one of Jeff's weirder moments (in terms of original gameplay rather than just putting lots of obscure South American mammals in it, at least), a game broadly derived from his classic shoot-'em-up *Gridrunner*. In *Laserzone*, though, you controlled two ships at once, one moving on the horizontal axis of the grid and one on the vertical axis. The ships could also combine for diagonal fire, but this could result in them shooting each other so it had to be used carefully. This version retains the exact same gameplay as before, but fiddles with the graphics (to poor effect, it has to be said) and requires one meg of memory to run (and that's with all peripherals disconnected!) compared with the original's 16K. There's not much to say about the gameplay, other than it's very hard and I had great difficulty getting the diagonal firing to work, and compared to the other Amiga versions of Jeff Minter stuff (*Metagalactic Llamas*, *Gridrunner* etc), this is a bit crap.

VERDICT: God only knows what the megabyte's being used for here, but 512K owners aren't missing out on much if they can't play this lacklustre conversion attempt. A good shoot-'em-up spoiled. ★★

MAGIC FOREST II (SON OF WILF)
(Deja Vu)

Doesn't anyone write games by themselves any more? Almost everything in this month's column is written using a commercial program of some sort, be it *AMOS*, *SEUCK* or whatever (and we've just had a couple of games written with *3D Construction Kit* come in even as I write). Mind you, at least this is an original idea. It's a very original idea, in fact – a strange puzzle/arcade/platform game where you have to kill bad guys by pumping up magic apples until the bits explode and kill them. Er, right. It looks gorgeous in a slightly crude *AMOS*-y kind of way and plays sweetly, if you can forgive it the highly iffy collision detection when it comes to the actual platforms. I, for one, certainly can, because this is as nice an original PD game as I've seen for quite a few months. It's playable and undemanding, and a fine way to spend an hour between bouts of the latest £35 mega-epic. Charming.

I'm not entirely sure who 'Wilf' is, or what's particularly magic about the forest, but this is a spiffy little game in any case

VERDICT: Cute and lovable platform game that's as original an idea as you're likely to see. Well worth a go. ★★★★

CLEAR
(Amiganuts)

The first thing you see when you load this game is a message telling you whether or not your Amiga has a Fatter Agnus chip, and if so if you'd like to switch to 60Hz mode in order to use the whole screen. This is a PD program. Some commercial games still don't give you this option and leave an unsightly big black block at the bottom of the picture. Accept no excuses. Getting back to the point, *Clear* is a novel little puzzle game based on the old 'removing-like-sets-of-pictures-until-they're-all-gone' principle, the difference in this case being that all the pictures are visible, but to remove them you have to move them until the like ones are adjacent to each other, by sliding the rows and columns of the screen around. It would be easy, were it not for the time and move limits imposed on you, which mean you have to plan your moves wisely. It's quite intriguing and challenging once you master the concept (the instructions aren't too clear – if you get stuck yourself, what you have to do is click on the squares at either end of the row you want to remove, not all the individual squares), and it's certainly pretty original as a puzzle game. Initially unimpressed, I found myself getting drawn into this – why not try it for yourself?

Commercial-quality software for next to no money – you know what to do by now

VERDICT: Clever and cerebral puzzler that'll have you scratching your head for a good while. This is the kind of thing which could easily make a commercial release, so snap it up before some enterprising software house does. ★★★★★

This month's contact addresses: NBS, 132 Gunville Road, Newport, PO30 5LH SEVENTEEN BIT SOFTWARE, PO Box 97, Wakefield, WF1 1XX ☎ 0924 366982; CRAZY JOE'S, 145 Effingham St, Rotherham S65 1BL ☎ 0703 785680; AMIGANUTS, 169 Dale Valley Road, Hollybrook, Southampton, SO1 6QX ☎ 0703 785680; and – hey! – more PD people, send us your stuff!

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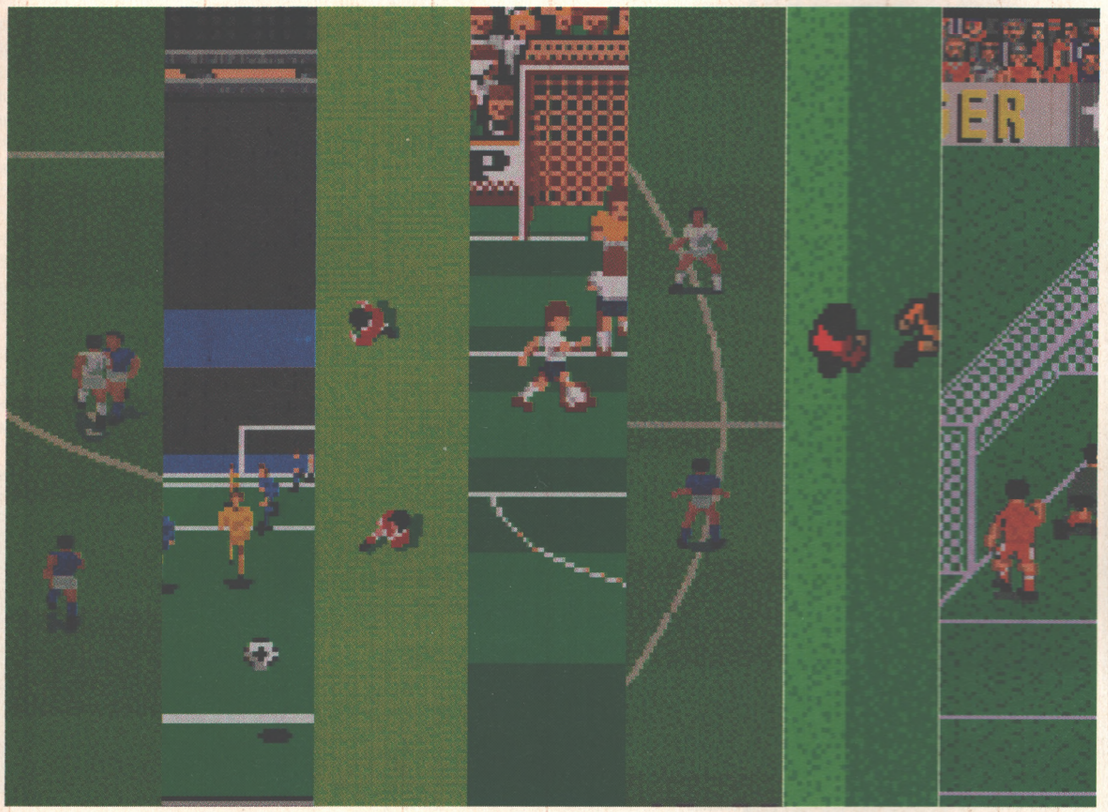
DEFINITION OF sound

FOOTBALL

Welcome to Definition Of Sound, the series where we (ahem) define what's sound. This month, Amiga soccer...



Put all the footy games ever released on the Amiga together and the result would look something like this – very confusing!

As the sport of the nation, and probably the world's top spectator game, football is an obvious subject for computer translation. Indeed, the first successful video game ever, *Pong*, featured a 'Football' game in most of its incarnations. While it's a long way from *Pong*'s 'two bats a side' implementation to the gorgeous graphics and sophisticated control of *Manchester United Europe*, anything which could possibly be tied in to soccer has been a surefire bet for game developers everywhere. All aspects of the sport have been simulated, from simply playing it to managing, directing, training, skill-perfecting, and even career-building, as seen in Gremlin's *Footballer Of The Year 2*, where the sole objective is to make money from bonuses, sponsorship, transfer fees and even (whisper it!) gambling!

Walk up to a complete stranger in the street, say 'Amiga football', and the chances are he'll reply '***Kick Off***'. Or something very close, anyway. Anco's lightning-speed arcade soccer sim has cast a huge shadow over the genre since its release in 1988, with nothing ever really coming close to stealing its crown. But why? The graphics are crappy, tiny little things (and you wouldn't believe the number of letters we get from sad boys telling us that anything with duff graphics is worthless), the control system is without a doubt the most unfriendly and un-instinctive in the entire history of computer gaming, presentation-wise it's nothing to get worked up →

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E & OE

about (there's not even an action replay), and it bears practically no resemblance to real football, what with the ball flying around like it was on a pinball table. So (to re-emphasize) why? Well, er, we're not entirely sure, to be honest with you. *Kick Off* is just one of those games with that magic something, that indefinable X-factor that lazy reviewers everywhere – er, that turns a game into a legend. It's incredibly fast, it's enormously playable (especially when you finally 'master' the controls), and that seems to be just about all it needs. Now available on budget, this is the game every football fan really ought to own.

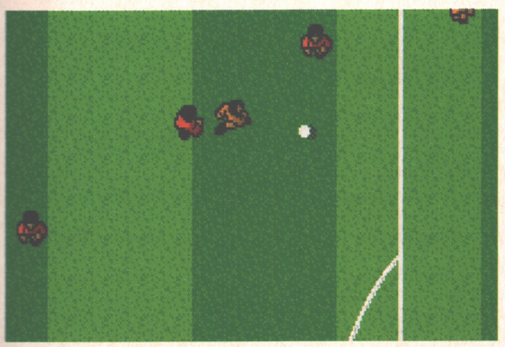
Actually, though, there is a footie game more popular than *Kick Off*, and it's called ***Kick Off 2***. Possibly the world's most successful sequel, *Kick Off 2* added a few fairly minor new features to the original (like a much-needed replay facility, the ability to put aftertouch on shots, and, er, a kit design feature) and included some things (like different types of pitch) first seen in *Extra Time*, a data disk for the first *Kick Off*. The most crucial addition, though, was that of a dramatically increased skill level for the computer-controlled goalkeepers. While this was a great leveller in games between human players of differing abilities (in itself a rather dubious concept – isn't the more skilled player winning a desirable objective?), it really screwed things up where games against the computer were concerned. Instead of clever moves being rewarded by goals, the new keepers meant that to score you simply had to find the one or two weaknesses in the goalies' algorithm and then exploit them mercilessly.

For many of us here at AMIGA POWER, this took practically all the fun out of the game, and it made the quirks of the control system all the less forgivable. An appropriate analogy for the two games might be found in RoboCop and RoboCop 2 (the films, not the games) – both movies are essentially identical, but with the follow-up's refinements and 'improvements' robbing it of all its character and originality, the things that made it so good in the first place. *Kick Off 2* is the Emperor's New Clothes of Amiga software. For *Kick Off 3* let's do something about those goalies, eh?

From here on, unfortunately, it's pretty much downhill all the way for footy lovers (a concept which Hibernian F.C. fans will find strangely familiar). Of all the Amiga's other contenders in the overhead view field, only three or four are even half-way serviceable. ***MicroProse Soccer*** is the best of the bunch, being basically a less extreme version of *Kick Off* – the graphics are bigger and prettier, the pace is somewhat slower and easier to keep up with, and the control is altogether friendlier, if less realistic in a number of ways. It's a deal less sophisticated, though, and at the end of the day (Brian) it tends to boil down into a simple race up the pitch towards the goal, without any of that tedious mucking around with passing or anything. A few brownie points are regained by the very stylish action replay (the picture 'rewinds' in black and white with TV-style scanning lines before replaying the goal) and the two distinct game types included (full-size and six-a-side indoor football), but for all the slick presentation, *MicroProse Soccer* never really sets the heather alight.

THIS TIME WE'LL GET IT RIGHT

US Gold also came up with a decent effort in their unofficial licence of the last World Cup, ***Italy 1990***. It played in much the same way as *MicroProse Soccer*, but featured beautifully-animated player graphics and excellent presentation, with the whole thing set up like TV coverage. The detail spread (for once) to the packaging too, as the game came complete with a World Cup dossier listing all sorts of relevant and 'interesting' World-Cup type facts, as well as info on all the squads. Admirably, this wasn't just window-dressing either – each player had various individual characteristics and skills, meaning you could select different teams depending on the strengths and weaknesses of your next opponents. Where it all fell down was by being just too easy – play as one of the better sides and you'd almost certainly go all the way to the Final and win the trophy inside three games. Even if you could muster the self-discipline to play as El Salvador or whoever, you'd still probably be able to beat Brazil within a day or so (especially as there was one trick which always resulted in a goal being scored – an extremely common flaw in computer football games), which left a serious question mark over *Italy 1990*'s lasting appeal. All the same, this is a respectable effort with a lot going for it, and in two-player mode the variation in team skills provides an interesting handicap facility. Soccer games are played more in two-player mode than any other genre, and for that purpose *Italy 1990* fits the bill quite acceptably.



Two name games – top *Emlyn's International Soccer* shows how not to do it, while *Gazza 2* is at least (ahem) passable.

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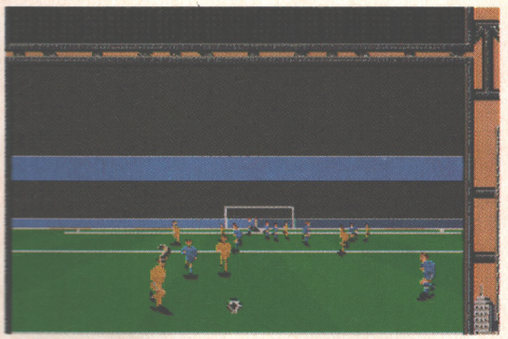


The AMIGA POWER fave footy romp *Man Utd Europe*, and the follow-up to *MicroProse Soccer*, *International Soccer Challenge* – offering a player's eye view of things.

The same can't be said for the remarkably-similarly titled ***Italia 1990*** from Code Masters, though. *Italia 1990* took all the worst elements from all the Amiga's other football games and threw them all together in one package.

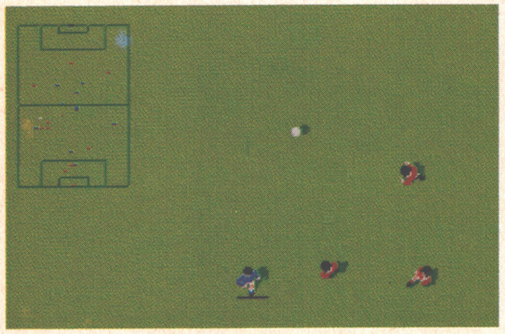
Crap sprites glided across the pitch going nowhere in particular, passing was impossible and unnecessary (as soon as you got possession, you were pretty much guaranteed not to lose it again), the ball paid no heed whatsoever to the laws of friction, you could win the ball at opposition goal-kicks simply by standing directly in front of the kicker and getting in his way, goals were best scored by punting the ball from just inside your own half and watching it trickle past the opposition goalkeeper, the screen blacked out whenever the ball went out of play, the teams stole the ball from each other at free kicks, goal kicks were awarded when the ball was stationary in the six-yard area, the crowd noise sounded like someone sneezing down a mile-long metal tube and – best of all – when you got into the lead, all you had to do was get control of the ball at a set-piece (throw-in, goal kick, kick off or whatever), and stand completely still. The game wouldn't restart, all the players would stand around waiting, and the clock would tick down regardless until full-time! If you want to see just how bad Amiga software can get, you couldn't do better than pick up a copy of this.

"MicroProse Soccer – a less extreme version of Kick Off"

CICCIOLINA FOR ITALIA, ITALIA

The last of the World Cup games released in 1990 was the official licence. ***World Cup 90*** from Virgin retained the same basic overhead-view look, albeit in a rather crude and tatty-looking way, and was allegedly a conversion of a coin-op, although we don't know anyone who claims to have seen the one it's supposedly based on. It's a decent enough game all the same, very much arcade-orientated, as can be seen by the bizarre shooting method. Whenever a player of either side enters the opposition's penalty area, the view suddenly switches to a head-on angle, allowing for a more sophisticated choice of shots. Unfortunately this novel idea doesn't really work in practice as it's far easier to score with long shots from outside the area, bypassing this sequence altogether. For the official licence, *World Cup 90* is also strangely unlike a real World Cup in structure, with a simple knock-out system operating all the way from preliminary rounds to the final, and with a curious and limited selection of teams involved. The fact that you can only actually play as one of four teams (England, Brazil, Italy or Hungary, or something ridiculous like that) immediately alienated most of the world's population, and the crap presentation (the manual contained pages and pages of totally irrelevant waffle about the rules of real soccer, the vast majority of which were inapplicable in the game, and next to nothing in the way of actual instructions) meant that US Gold's unofficial →

DEFINITION OF sound



The good, the bad and the ugly. As you'll notice, there're only two games shown here. The first is *Kick Off* (that's the good). The second is *Gazza's Super Soccer* (that's the bad *and* the ugly). We're sure you'll have no trouble selecting the best.

a second at a time. Since it wasn't actually a very fast-moving game, this made progress a slow and painstaking affair, and frankly it wasn't really worth the effort. As a two-player game it wasn't at all bad, but then it's probably true that you can say that about most things.

Worse still was another coin-op conversion, Activision's port of SNK's ***Fighting Soccer***. Huge player sprites on a minuscule pitch did away totally with the possibility or need for any interesting tactical play, reducing matters to a simple charge-up-the-pitch-and-hit-the-fire-button-a-lot slog which was, in fact, a very good replication of the arcade machine. The simple fact is that the coin-op was so crap, Activision were onto a loser from the start.

The last entry in this particular field is ***Gary Lineker's Hot Shot***, a game which was never released as a full-price product. It falls somewhere between *Kick Off* and *MicroProse Soccer*, being reasonably fast-paced and realistically-scaled (ie the pitch was huge relative to the players), but lacking either the frenetic action of Anco's game or the slick presentation of *MPS*. It was playable enough, and it's a fair buy at budget price, but there's nothing much here that you can't get better elsewhere.

effort stomped all over this one in terms of creating a Mondiale atmosphere, as well as being a better football game.

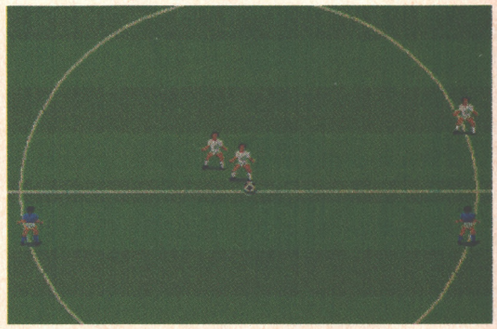
Still in the overhead-view category, we find a couple of titles which give the Code Masters game a run for its money in the crap stakes. Elite's ***World Championship Soccer*** was a conversion of a reasonable Sega coin-op which was stylishly presented (it shared quite a few aspects of *Italy 1990*) and good-looking, but ruined by the skill of the computer teams who very rarely allowed you to keep possession of the ball for more than about

MOVING IT SIDEWAYS, SIDEWAYS

The second major division of computer football games is that of the sideways-on angled view, a style that gained enormous popularity in the heyday of the 8-bits (most notably with *International Soccer* on the C64 and *Match Day* on the Spectrum). It's a style that hasn't really caught on on the 16-bits, with only three titles employing it, with varying success. The earliest attempt went by the unpromising name of ***Emlyn Hughes International Soccer***, and was (surprise!) strongly influenced by the classic C64 game. A horribly confusing and unfriendly menu system made it forbidding to get into, but if you made the effort you got a football experience best described as 'adequate'. A small pitch cut down the scope for doing anything very interesting, and although the sound is easily the best of all the games collected here, it's not nearly enough to save it from obscurity. Interestingly though, a recent management game can be run in conjunction with *EHIS* as a *Player Manager* type of thing, which at least provides it with some potential. Whether anyone's actually bothered to try and see how it works is a bit of a moot point though...

A game which doesn't strictly belong in this category (or indeed anywhere else except for at the bottom of a very deep hole) is the Oh Dear-featured ***Gazza's Super Soccer*** from Empire. The sideways view only actually accounted for a third of the pitch, as on the ball entering either end area the perspective switched to an overhead-and-behind angle more like that of *Italia 1990*. Reminiscent of football only in as far as it's got a ball in it, this is a game designed and programmed with the same aptitude its hero shows for taking defeat like a man. 'Nuff said.

Restoring some respectability to the game type, ***Manchester United Europe*** from Krisalis is a gorgeous-looking effort which has quite a bit in common with the recently-popular Tecmo coin-op ***World Cup 90*** (don't you just love these imaginative titles?). Our dear departed Dep Ed Colin actually reckons this is the



US Gold's *Italy 1990* – the unofficial game of the World Cup, but definitely the best. With excellent presentation and a good game of footy to boot, tearfully good.

best Amiga footy game out, and many of us agree with him. It's beautifully put together, there's lots of scope for clever moves, the controls are instinctive and easily-grasped, and the pacing is just right for exciting but controlled action. The only downer is the presence of a 'Golden Shot', a tactic which always results in a goal, but at least in *MUE* the relevant position is a pretty hard one to get into. If you can muster just a little self-discipline and resist the temptation to play to that one weakness, this is a passably realistic and extremely entertaining soccer sim.

THE WIMBLEDON EMULATION TACTIC

Some games don't directly conform to these two main traditional styles, though. MicroProse followed up *MicroProse Soccer* with ***International Soccer Challenge***, a weird 'player's-eye view' game which brought a first-person perspective (seemingly as much for it's own sake as anything else), but it was all just too confusing to work properly. A brave effort all the same, and one which was built on by Simulmondo with their ***I Play 3D Soccer***. This is certainly the most realistic-looking football game on the Amiga to date, but in play it's just *too* realistic, in that you very rarely get to actually kick the ball. It's surprisingly fast-moving and rewards the effort required to get into it properly, but there's not enough pure fun here for most people.

Also in the 'individual' category is Empire's ***Gazza 2***. Ploughing a completely different furrow to the earlier disaster, this is a *Kick Off*-style effort, but one which abandons the normal vertical-scrolling style and attempts to use the dimensions of the Amiga's screen to lend a bit more scope to the action. While the idea of a horizontally scrolling *Kick Off* is sound (it eliminates the two-player disadvantage of playing down the screen) the game doesn't really work, being too fast for its own good (the best tactic is to simply belt the ball up the pitch and chase it – one kick can travel almost the whole length of the field) and so graphically primitive it makes *Kick Off* look like *Shadow Of The Beast*. A dramatic improvement on the first game, though. We wait with bated breath for the release of *Gazza 3* – 'How many opponents can you incapacitate with waist-high tackles before tearing your own limbs apart? '

And on that note... ●

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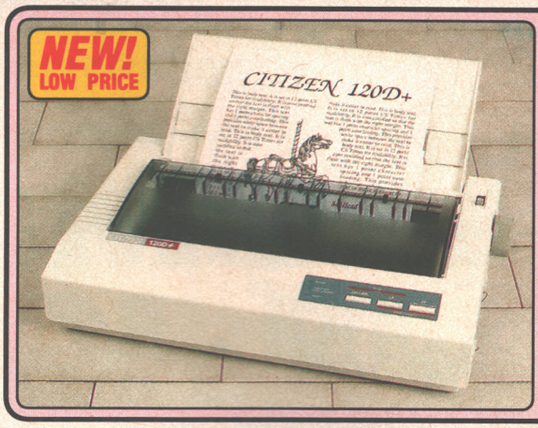

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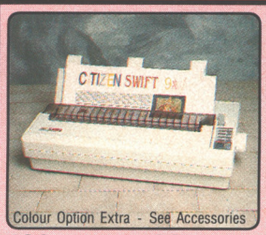

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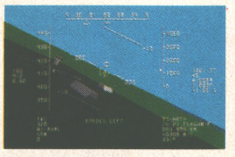
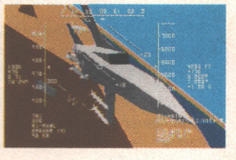
Alright, so (more than likely) you're never going to get within spitting distance of a fast jet, let alone ride in one or (God forbid!) fly the blasted thing – we all accept that. And even if – and there might be one or two of you out there – you *are* a Tornado jockey, you're not going to get to try out every fighter plane in the world, are you? That's where EA's new *Birds Of Prey* comes in. F-15s, Harriers, Stealths – we've never seen so many planes! And you get to fly the lot of them! It's a truely stunning game, then, but it's not the only way to fly...





THE PRIZES!

Given decent weather and a good sized park or field you can do it for real – with one of these excellent remote control model planes. We've got five of the things to give away, and they really are excellent fun (not that we've gone and tried one of them out in the park or anything, oh no). They're Nikko Sky Aces, they cost around £120 each, they're powered by special rechargable batteries, and they come with everything you need to fly. Each plane's about two feet long and is a 1/12 scale model of a Cessna or something like that – not quite of the calibre of the stars of *Birds Of Prey* perhaps, but – hey! – we've all got to start somewhere.
Five winners then, but we've also got 15 runners up prizes – our way of saying sorry guys, you didn't quite make it, but hey, here's a free Electronic Arts game of your choice (*Birds Of Prey* not included – you can go out and buy it yourselves, you tightwads!) to make up for it anyway.

SO WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

It's simple. All you have to do is answer these three (vaguely) *Birds Of Prey* related questions:

1. **Electronic Arts flight sim star Chuck Yeager was originally famous for what, exactly?**
2. **Who eventually shot down the Red Baron?**
3. **Who was the first man to fly the Atlantic?**
4. **Who was the creator of the Biggles books?**
5. **And what were the names of Biggles two wizard chums?**

MAKE SURE YOU DO THIS...

Now scribble the answers on the back of an envelope or postcard and post it off to us at: A million ways to fly! Compo, AMIGA POWER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. Make sure it reaches us by January 31st 1992, and – whatever you do! – remember to include your own name and address!

RULES AND REGULATIONS

- You know the drill by now. First comes the closing date – in this case the 31st January 1992.
- Then it's the bit that says the editor's decision is final – we won't enter into correspondence about the competition.
- Then there's the 'employees of Future Publishing and, in this case, Electronic Arts aren't allowed to enter' section. And there we have it!

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"Dear AMIGA POWER, I am writing to complain about..." Stop right there! Okay, so we ask people to go just a little easy on the letters of praise and what do we get? A litany of abuse and petty whinging on every subject under the sun from Stuart N. Hardy to the Amiga Plus to Ocean to the state of the environment(!). We love it! And there's more...

● Address your letters to AMIGA POWER, Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW

Dear AMIGA POWER,

In response to issue six, I think that everything Steve said (sorry, wrote) was everything that I would have written in response to the reply you gave to my letter, but 80 percent for *3D*, high in AMIGA POWER's rating! *(No, I don't understand this sentence either -Ed).* So *Midwinter II* showed all the qualities of 3D, I think not. *(He's talking about* 3D Construction Kit*, riddle fans. Young Andrew wrote a letter in issue five complaining about our 'critical' review of said product, although he admitted he hadn't actually read the review and was basing his whinge on the Bottom Line entry in the subsequent ish -Ed).* Please, tell me, if this is supposed to be such a non techy mag, why did you review it in the first place? *(Because it's all about games, and it's got a game built into it -Ed).* Don't accuse me of being stupid *(You're doing a fine job by yourself -Ed),* but doesn't it contain SOME programming, or did I use a different construction kit? I call this case closed. *(I call it semi-literate rubbish, but there you go -Ed).*
Further complaints follow:

● Why don't you use a kind of emblem or logo for a game which shows exceptional qualities, so programmers can show off the award they got from your mag, such as Format's Gold award? *(Because we figure most of our readers can deduce for themselves that a 90 percent mark means a game's pretty good -Ed).*

● Amiga Format brings me onto another subject. Why, oh why do you boast that Format is your 'sister' mag when your reviews are totally different, eg *Exile*? *(Because it's true -Ed)*

● Something has to be said about the Top 100. *(Ooh, topical -Ed). Rainbow Islands* Number One. I had to check my calendar to check if it was April 1st *(Ho ho -Ed).*

● The rest of the Top 100 wasn't much good neither, you misled many people that I know.

● Can someone tell me why suddenly every (MegaDrive) owner hates Amigas and their owners. *(Are you sure it isn't just you? -Ed).*

● *Lemmings* – the ultimate Amiga game? (I think not).

● I want lots of argument for this letter, you didn't hurt me so much last time. *(Look, there are people you can pay for that kind of thing. We've got a magazine to write -Ed).*

● You said I lived in Stockton last time, I live in Stoke-On-Trent, okay!

● I will take your advice and not mention that you won't print this letter – oops!

How incidental it was, you said, no sorry, boasted, that every magazine you publish would contain a full price game (Power Preview, Amiga Format). *(Is this guy a slow reader or what? -Ed).* But after two months and two terrible games (that somehow got into the top 100) ELSPA announce that covermounted games are banned – what a shame! Don't get me wrong, your magazine isn't bad, its rubbish! You will no doubt hear from me again! *(I do hope not -Ed)*
Yours (enjoying writing this letter),
Andrew Herbert, Stoke-on-Trent (not Stockton)

P.S. Is *Advanced Lawnmower Simulator* coming out for the Amiga?

We print this letter as an example of what happens when you skip English classes to sneak out for a quick fag behind the bikesheds. (I'm in a foul mood today, and that's no lie -Ed).

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I'll get straight to the point. This is my first ever letter to a computer mag, and I'm afraid it's a complaint. I get two or three computer mags a month, and I always read the letters pages. I have noticed that Stuart N Hardy has had at least two letters printed in every mag. No doubt you will not print this letter *(We'll let you off with that this once, since it doesn't seem like an attempt to be clever or snidey for a change -Ed),* because I expect you get hundreds every month, but that's exactly why I'm writing. Most people have more important issues to discuss in mags than Stuart, and they never get their letters published. Stuart brings up a boring subject each month just for the sake of it. What I'm trying to say is give other readers a chance to speak out and do us all a favour. Stop printing Stuart's rubbish letters please.
Yours sincerely,
Christopher Steurland, Leicester

This is just one example from a pile of 112 letters we got expressing varying degrees of antipathy towards dear old Stuart. It's nothing personal, Stu, but you seem to have wound our readers up something rotten. Anything to say for yourself?

Dear AMIGA POWER,

Browsing in my local newsagents the other day, I was a little puzzled when I noticed that both yourselves and that tacky rag The One For Amiga Games were claiming to be the best-selling Amiga games mag in the country. The One even boasted that their claim was 'official' is some way, and quoted an ABC figure as proof. While I'd take anything they say with a pinch of salt after reading some of their recent reviews, surely they can't get away with something like that if it isn't true. Or can they?
Yours confusedly,
Karen Eliot, Edinburgh

What we have here, Karen, is a real can of worms and no mistake. The One For Amiga Games doesn't sell as many copies as we do, but we haven't been on sale for long enough to have an ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) figure to back up our claims (we'll get one early next year after we've been around for one of the full six month periods they base them on), which is why they can claim to be 'officially' the biggest seller. It's not quite as simple as that, though, because The One in its 'Amiga-only' incarnation isn't old enough to have an ABC figure either *– the one they quote is made up mainly of sales of the 'old' The One, which catered for Amiga, ST and PC formats, and is in fact the subject of complaints from rival publishers even as we speak. What we suspect will happen is we'll both go on claiming to be the best seller until next year when the true ABC figures for both mags come through and then one of us will be forced to drop it. No prizes for guessing who it'll be though.*

Dear AP,

In response to Adrian Pannett's idea of having a readers' review of games; I think that this would be a good idea.
To explain, you have to admit that all of your reviewers are of roughly the same age *(Only physically -Ed)* and this will lead to similar opinions. I would say that the most 'computerised' age group would be school goers, people from 7 to 15 years old. It's us lot who play the games, but as they are reviewed by different-aged people, this leads to conflicting opinions. For example, a friend of mine, aged 8, was really annoyed with having forked out

£50 SOFTWARE winner

Dear AMIGA POWER,

This letter involves not only yourselves but all other magazines that supply demo disks (which incidentally have been great in AP up to now). You can imagine how horrified I was when, shopping in a large local computer store (I'll not name it for now), I noticed a box of disks on one of the shelves with a price tag of £2. Curiosity got the better of me and I asked to see them, only to find they were demo disks from all types of magazines, with the magazine label cleverly blanked out or disguised. I played ignorant with the assistant and asked what they were, to which he replied "They are games which have not yet been released". Gotcha!

God only knows how many unsuspecting youngsters or parents have bought these not knowing they are only demos! I immediately asked to see the manager and informed him that they were effectively robbing Joe Public and could ruin the future of demo disks. He was very apologetic and claimed he didn't realise they were on sale and that one of the sales assistants had obviously done this off his own bat.

Well, the disks were removed and destroyed, but I feel that you and other magazines should identify the disks as freebies on the plastic as well as the labels as I'm sure this goes on all over the country and must be brought to a swift halt. The last thing we want is for ELSPA to use this as an argument against cover disks.
Yours in Amiga,
Warren Starrett, Craigavad.

That's an interesting and slightly disturbing story, Warren. Have any other readers experienced any similar rip-offs? Write and tell us at 'It's A Fair Cop Guv But Society's To Blame' at the usual address.

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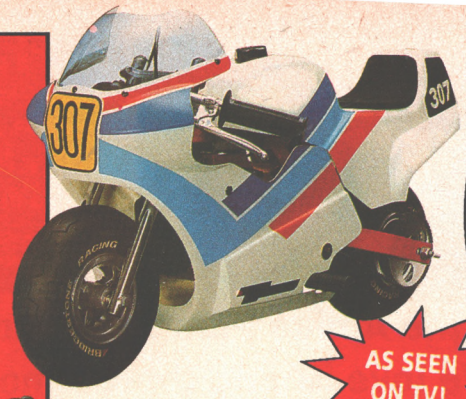

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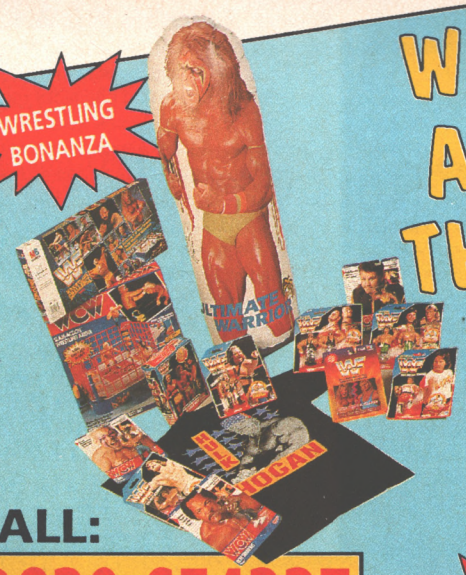

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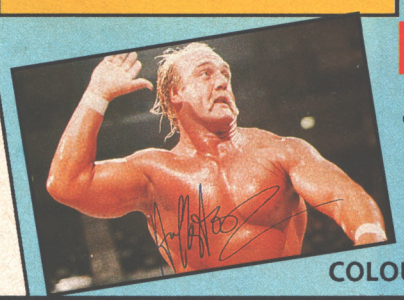

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several weeks hard-earned pocket money on *Powermonger* and finding it totally confusing and boring, whereas, having bought it myself, I found the game one of my best buys ever. This is simply due to the fact that an 8-year-old may not be able to find an involved, strategic game enjoyable whereas a 15-year old can! All that would be needed would be a column for a younger player, written BY a younger player about how THEY found the game. It wouldn't even take very long to write about 200 words on a game. Anyway, that's what I think.
Thanks for reading,
Andrew Brodie (aged 15), Biggin Hill

We see where you're coming from, Andrew (although, is that the scent of self-interest we smell?), but your argument falls down on the rather shaky proposition that simply being the same age means people are going to have the same opinions on any particular game. If you could hear some of the arguments about ratings we have in the office every month, you'd soon abandon that notion.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

My friend and I are thinking of starting a PD library and we have a couple of simple questions to ask.
(1) Can we buy programs from other PD libraries and re-sell them?
(2) Have you any tips?
Yours hopefully,
Michael Ritchie, Keynsham

(1) Yes.
(2) Um, not really. Sorry.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I am writing to complain about the number of people that are going on about the big packaging that games come in. When you're paying out that sort of money for a game it feels nice to have packaging that is quality and people are going on about it.

Personally I think that the boxes are very nice and for £25 I think that you should have boxes like that, not little fiddly boxes like the Spectrum's, which, as soon as you get hold of them slip out of your hands. Personally I don't think people would like it if they came in little boxes. What are other people's views on this?
Yours faithfully,
Leslie Stock, Oldham.

Well, Leslie, we have to say that most other people's views seem to be along the lines of this next letter...

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I am writing to complain *(not another one - Ed)* about the size of software packaging these days. I recently purchased the game *SWIV*. After playing it for a few hours I decided to pack up for the day, but opening my desk drawer I found there was no space left, it was crammed with oversize boxes. What is the point in having software boxes so big? What's wrong with the small plastic boxes, there's enough room in there for a disk and decent booklet. I mean, just look at *FA/18 Interceptor* with the Batman Pack. They managed to cram all that stuff into that tiny box – why can't all software houses do this? They seem to reckon bigger boxes mean better games. Just look at *Hard Drivin'*, the box is ridiculously huge and the game is ridiculously crap. This is just totally stupid and it should stop.
Yours faithfully,
James Dilworth, Banff.

The reason they do it, James, is that software houses reckon that most people are like young Leslie from the letter above – our mailbag doesn't bear them out, but we don't see it changing in the near future.

Oh, and if you think you've got problems, try imagining what it's like in here – Colin (the old Dep Ed) has already been killed by a huge teetering mound of the stuff falling on him (don't believe any of that 'Commodore Format' nonsense), and it's going to get worse before it gets better. Now for a letter on a strangely connected topic...

Dear Sirs,

Even the most dedicated programmer has to surface from the latest software package sometimes for a breather, to put their feet up, have a coffee and watch the telly. It can't possibly have escaped their attention that in the past few years people are finally becoming aware of the destruction of the environment that is taking place because of the way Homo Sapiens are misusing and abusing the Earth's Natural Resources. It certainly hasn't escaped our attention because as the local Friends Of The Earth group we have witnessed a spectacular increase in the number of individuals and groups that request information on environmental subjects and help in campaigning against ill-considered 'developments'.

This interest is welcomed, but it means that a professional standard and level of work is expected of us, a voluntary group. To be blunt, we need a word processing facility. We require one to store and file information, and to print out corres-pondence (unfortunately, many companies do not respond to handwritten letters).

If any of your readers have surplus word processing equipment or are replacing old items with the latest models, we would be extremely grateful if they could donate their old equipment to us. We cannot possibly fulfil the public demand for our services without it. Recycle your old WPs for a worthy cause!
Yours faithfully,
Les Wallace, Forth Valley F.O.E., 93a Mary Strat, Laurieston, Falkirk, FK2 9PR
This letter wins the 'Most Tenuous Connection To Amiga Games' prize for this month, which is three and a half tons of old unnecessarily-large game boxes for recycling. If you'd like to sneakily turn an Amiga-related topic into a barely-concealed appeal for freebie kit of some kind, write to 'Games – Aren't They Great And By The Way I'd Really Like A New Car' at the usual address... Seriously, if anyone out there fancies themselves as a friend of the Earth, get in touch with Les – you know it's what Captain Planet would want you to do.

Dear Sirs,

I'm an intelligent, educated and mature lady who finds that she prefers playing computer games in her spare time. I find them challenging and educational, so why is it that other people – many of whom are less educated than me – look down on this form of entertainment as being childish and easy, when in reality many are far more taxing than other pleasures?
Yours,
Ms Carmen Brulez, Ilford.

PS I'm a psychotherapist with an IQ of more than 154.

Good question, Carmen. Beats us. And now, just for a little variation, it's...Paul A. Hardy Corner!!!

Dear Sir,

First of all, may I compliment you on last month's excellent coverdisk? *(Oh, okay then -Ed).* Not only were we treated to the splendid *Super Twintris*, but the classic *Asteroids* was also included. Whatever did we do to deserve it?

Secondly, what else can I say but "Oh Dear..."? It seems my brother has somehow managed to upset one of your readers *(Er, about 112 of our readers at the last count, but carry on -Ed)*, namely Paul Connolly. True, Stuart does write lots of letters on various subjects – and it is a fact that he has won over £600 from computer magazines for submitting letters and other information. He would not win anything for submitting 'intensely dull missives' now, would he? If Stuart wants to make a statement about the software industry, he is man enough to place his ideas and concerns in a letter, and why shouldn't he when even Paul Connolly refers to his as 'literate'? It is a well-known fact that literate people like doing literate things – and that includes writing letters! More so if it will help to promote the public interest.

To my mind, Paul Connolly is an extremely poor critic. Everybody is entitled to an opinion, yes, but the last thing a critic should do is contradict himself, if he wishes to be taken seriously! How on Earth can the material in Stuart's letters be BOTH 'novel and never-discussed' AND 'well-worn and predictable' as well? Simple – it cannot! *(Er, don't they have sarcasm where you come from, Paul? -Ed).* True, Stuart's letters' topics are 'novel and never-discussed' – hence all the more reason for his letters to be printed in the first place! Fresh ideas in letters pages stop them from becoming boring. And that is WHY so many of his letters are printed...
Yours faithfully,
Paul A Hardy, Sheffield.

PS I hope you sent Paul Connolly some more cornflakes boxes to read as this sad individual seems to have nothing else better to do...

Oh boy. We don't mean to be nasty, but do the words 'sense of humour' mean anything to you, Paul? Just as a matter of interest, how old are you? We'd like to know.

Dear AMIGA POWER,

I wonder if you could tell me why on most Amiga games the bottom fifth of the screen is blank? I recently got *Switchblade II* and *SWIV* and both have full screens! This greatly improves the look of the games, so why don't all games use the full screen?

Also on *SWIV* is the Dynamic Loader System which means the game loads as you play, so no annoying pauses between levels etc. I would like to see the day when all Amiga games use up all of the screen and load up 'as you play'. Do you think there's any chance of this happening?
Yours faithfully,
Stephen Harrison, Bradford.

There's no reason why it shouldn't, Stephen. The blank area is to do with the differences between the American TV system and the British one, but the only reason we get blank bits is because some programmers and software houses are just too lazy to allow properly for this in their games. As for dynamic loading, Storm have copyrighted their system to prevent other companies from using it (which is understandable, if a bit of a shame), but other programmers are finding other ways of circumventing the long loading delay syndrome – check out Vivid Image's First Samurai, *for one. It has lots of enormous and graphically complex levels, but loading pauses are almost non-existent (about eight seconds of loading in total for the whole thing, all ten levels! We don't know how they did it, but it's very impressive), and we're sure other programmers will come up with equally nifty tricks in the future.*

Dear AP,

Having been a games player for a while, and moving through the ranks (or should that be climbing the mountain) from Spectrum to C64 to (finally) the Amiga, I had regarded Ocean as the only decent software company. On the Speccy and the Commy they released some rip-roaring original titles (in ye olde days) and more recently some good licenses like *RoboCop* and *Batman* on the Spec and *Midnight Resistance* and *Shadow Warriors* on the C64. While these were fine on the basic machines, asking £26 for such limited stuff is a bit of a joke. I've been even more disappointed, though, with their releases over the last six months. Only *Head Over Heels* has been any good, and that's from the 'golden age'. Every poor sucker who buys Ocean's latest big game now is paying for their next big-name license. We

5 PRISM POCKET POWER GAMES WINNER!

Dear AMIGA POWER,
Seeing as you're such a great and kind mag, can you give me some games for free?
Yours hopefully,
Jonathan S. J-B, London

DO THE write THING

expect a bit more for £26 than this pitiful decline into sub-average games. Take a look at Psygnosis and Gremlin for how it should be done.
Yours,
Graeme Virtue, Galashiels.

Dear Sirs,

Re your November issue, following your reply to Kevin Howell's letter regarding Amiga hard drives, I think you missed the point completely. He was asking you to state in your reviews whether the game could be installed on a hard drive. Contrary to what is commonly stated in all the monthly magazines, a large proportion of Amiga games can be installed on a hard drive. The following is a list of current games I know that are hard drive compatible:

Flames Of Freedom, Flight Of The Intruder, Monkey Island, F-15 Strike Eagle II, Rise Of The Dragon, Railroad Tycoon, Cruise For A Corpse, PGA Tour Golf, Life & Death, Wonderland, Silent Service II, any Sierra game, *Centurion,* all SSI games, *Mega Traveller 1.*

Most adventures and simulations (with the exception of *F-19 Stealth Fighter*) are hard drive compatible and in general it is only arcade-type games that still have irritating on-disk protection.

Let me also say that some firms are particularly guilty of using on-disk protection and therefore are treating Amiga users like children – try that in the PC market or in the USA and see how many sales there are! These companies include the likes of Ocean, Gremlin, Core Design and Psygnosis.

All the Amiga users I know – including myself – will not buy software from these companies, as loading from floppies is a real pain if you have an alternative. Also, if software has heavy on-disk protection, then the AmigaDOS guidelines are bypassed, and the software is not compatible with faster processors like the 68030.

So please, let us serious users of our favourite machine know in your reviews if software has on or off-disk protection, and if it can be installed on a hard drive.
Yours sincerely,
Iain MacKenzie, London.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have already written one letter to you with complaints, but I have more from the same issue. I will not list them for there is too many, all of them are in the magazine. I just hope the next issue will be better, thought you'd like to know.
Yours faithfully,
Robert Crabb, Calne.

Er, thanks, Robert.

Dear AP,

Well, here's a letter from a very annoyed Amiga user. "Why?" I hear you say. *(Er, "why"? -Ed).* Well, let me give you the plot. I enjoy computers, I'm 20 years old and I have fond memories of my 'school daze' with the humble and wonderfully economical C64 which graced my bedroom with its happy graphics and jolly tunes. At the age of 18 I needed a spot of cash due to 'teething' problems I was experiencing. That's right, I sold my trusty C64 with a parting tear.

Now two years on, I'm married ("Why so young?", you ask) and I live in my own house etc and life is okay. Being married and quite young I still have the urge to do interesting things like get blasted in the nearest tavern, but the wife, God bless her, won't adhere to this form of behaviour. So what do I do on these cold nights? ("I could think of a thing or two!", you say). Well, I thought to myself, "Where's my old C64?" Perfect! I'm earning a decent wage – buy another one! But then it saw me, and I saw it – the 'Cartoon Classics' box, the free *Lemmings* game – the gorgeous sound and looks of the new Amiga 500 Plus giving me one meg built in for just £399.99! "Buy me on credit!" it said. So I did! I got it home – I loaded the disks – I played the games! *(It's going well so far -Ed)* I was eager for more. But I had my wife yelling at me "A computer!? How old are you?! I need a washing machine and you've bought a computer!" So I bought the washing machine as well. Anyway, after zapping away into the early hours of the morning, blowing up lemmings on purpose, I bought AMIGA POWER. (A great magazine – when I had the C64 it was Zzap!, but now AP is the best on the rack). I loaded the demo disk – it didn't work. Argh! Never mind, I'll buy some budget games – only £7.99 for my favourite old C64 games converted to the Amiga! Load 'em in... Aaargh! They don't work! I took them back to the shop and said "They won't load". So they tried them on their (ordinary) Amiga, and they worked wonderfully. The man said (you'll love this...) "What computer have you got?" I said "The Amiga Plus with the one meg built in!" He said "Sorry sir, it's a faulty machine - 80% of half meg games won't work on it". AAARRRGGH!

What am I going to do? I have an Amiga that's brand new but too good for its own good, and at 36.8% APR! So why can't I play my favourite games? I need an answer, it's wrecking my marriage, I sit at home and watch my new washing machine spinning and I feel like shoving my Amiga inside it. I want to buy some new games, but I don't know if they're going to work. Give me some hints...
Yours waitingly,
Chris Orchard, Derby.

This heart-rending tale of domestic woe is just one of a veritable sackload we've had in the last couple of weeks regarding the old games disaster with the Amiga Plus. As we explained in True Stories last month it's not strictly Commodore's fault – the new machine, the A500 Plus, is a considerably better computer than the old one was (you'll be thankful of it in the long run, as we'll explain), and most problems are caused by old programmers taking not-recommended-by-Commodore short cuts in their programming which react badly to the new machine. If they'd done everything exactly as Commodore said they should, much of this wouldn't have happened.

Anyway, that's all by-the-by now –all new games will *be compatible with the Plus in the future, but that's no help to people who've bought or would like to buy older games or compilations that simply* won't *work. Our advice – see if you can find out from your shop before you buy a game if it's going to work with your machine or not. Most switched on shops will be very aware of the situation, and may even have stickers on the products by now. Instead of dwelling on what will only be a short-term downside to the new machine, think of these plus points instead: 1) Your new machine is more powerful, and its abilities will hopefully make for better games in the future. 2) It's a lot more friendly to use if you ever fancy doing anything 'serious' with it. 3) The updating of the Amiga will keep it highly competitive with rivals like low-end PCs, which means more games will be written for it, which is good news for all Amiga owners.*

Dear AP,

For a couple of months I have been buying lots of different computer magazines, not buying one all the time. Could you tell me why in one magazine a review of *Midwinter II* appeared in their April issue and yet your review appeared in the October issue.
Yours totally bewildered,
J Lewis, Barnet.

Ah, this old chestnut. The fact of the matter, J, is that the other magazine didn't review Midwinter II, *it reviewed an extremely early, nowhere near complete, preview version of* Midwinter II. *We don't think it's fair to you, our readers to review anything other than the exact same product that you're going to buy in the shops, so we wait until a game's completely finished before we cover it. That's why our reviews are hopefully the most truthful in the business.*

Dear Sir,

Your magazine is certainly BIG; a big disappointment! At the bottom of page 39 in issue three there is a clipboard displaying a patient's symptoms in *Life & Death*; these are just the ones I display after wading through an endless succession of Vertical/Horizontal/Beat-'Em-Ups/Shoot-'Em-Ups/Blow-'Em-Ups!!!

Presumably, you think all of us out here are like yourselves, a bunch of spotty faced nerds only concerned with mindless joystick waggling. *(Yeah, there's nothing we like more than a frenzied spot of waggling on* Mega Traveller, Railroad Tycoon, Populous II, Deuteros, Hunter, Eye Of The Beholder, Monkey Island, Silent Service II, *etc etc -Ed).* It seems, that any game with a strategy element is suspect and as for pure strategy games, these appear to need handling with a pair of tongs and rubber gloves! Why don't you grow up?

I realise that at 64 I am not "yer average reader", but, I am new to computing, and therefore was looking to you to fulfil your pre-publication claims that you were going to review older games. *(You haven't read The Bottom Line, then? -Ed).* To me references to XYZ as a 'standard' for a particular genre are meaningless as I don't know the game and it was particularly galling for two football sims to be compared side by side whilst Wimbledon was on when two tennis sims would have been more appropriate. *(I think you're missing the point here just slightly – we reviewed the football games because they came out that month, that's our job. If there had actually been two tennis games released at the time, then we'd have covered them -Ed).*

Another let down is release dates: here at last I thought, was a magazine that didn't review games that appeared on the "this year, next year, sometime, never" basis but *Deuteros*, which you said was due out at the end of August is not even finished at the software house yet! *(Says who? I't* was *due out then, which is why we reviewed it that issue – we weren't to know Activision would change their minds on us!* Deuteros *has been finished for ages, but what with Activision closing down their UK division earlier this year and moving European operations to France, lots of finished games have been delayed* – Hunter *and* R-Type II *are two – and this is simply another casualty -Ed).*

I realise that the summer months are a bit 'dead' for major releases but I am afraid that you will have to do a lot better in the next few months if I am to renew my subscription.
Yours doubtfully,
T.D. Burge, Banstead.

Tosh. That's the lot for this month - we hope you've enjoyed this extended three-page column. Now just room for these... ●

AND ANOTHER THING...

- Several writers are alarmed by the fact that £30 seems to be becoming more and more the standard price for any half-decent game. "It's daylight robbery!" says Jonathan Britton of York.
- Michael Embrey of Chorley doesn't like the fact that we 'only review games'. That's what we're here for, Michael, sorry.
- MJ Chenery of Norwich thinks we downrated *Magic Pockets* because of unfair comparisons with *Rainbow Islands*. No MJ, we downrated it because it's boring.
- 'Big Bad Ben' from Southend has a silly name, so that's enough about him.
- Didier Wittesaele of Brussels has just discovered a game called *Hard'n'Heavy* on the Milestones compilation from Softgold, and wants everyone to know how brilliant it is. Why haven't you sent us a copy, Softgold?
- And that's it until next month. Bye y'all.

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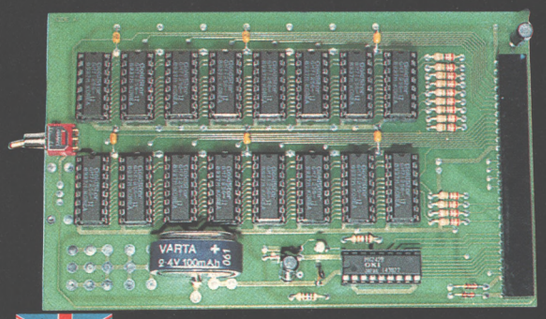

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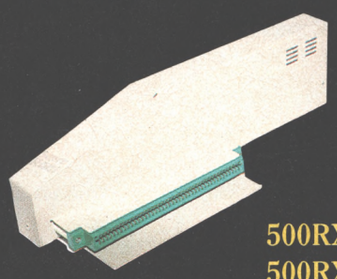

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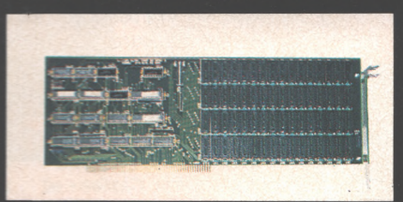

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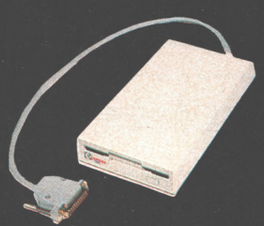

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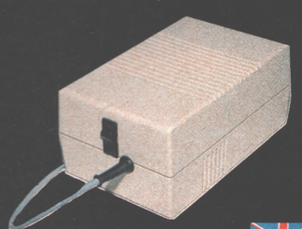

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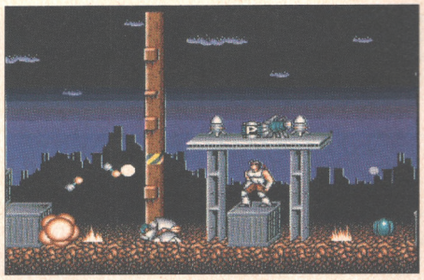

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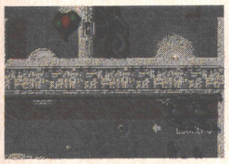
AH37-M THUNDERHAWK
Core £30.99

Uppers – The fastest, slickest 3D graphics yet to grace the Amiga. The arcade approach makes things much easier to get to grips with. ***Downers*** – The lack of real sim elements may put some off, and the mouse control is a bit unwieldy. ***The Bottom Line*** – A brilliantly executed arcade-simulation crossover, which captures the frenetic helicopter feel quite excellently. ★★★★★

ALIEN BREED
Team 17 £25.99



Uppers – Fast-moving and atmospheric *Gauntlet* variant, with lots of lovely touches, a two player mode, and a free *Pong* game! ***Downers*** – Only six levels, and it's not the kind of game you're likely to come back to when you've finished it. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not a bad effort at all from the ex-PD boys, but maybe a little thin to last for long. ★★★★

ALPHA WAVES
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Nice 3D bouncing romp. Bizarre, but endearing (in a French sort of way). ***Downers*** – It tends to feel like an executive toy, and a very expensive one at that. ***The Bottom Line*** – A novel diversion but no great shakes. ★★

ALTERED DESTINY
Accolade £29.99

Uppers – An absorbing adventure in true American style. ***Downers*** – It's not really anything new, and it sure isn't up to Lucasfilm standards. ***The Bottom Line*** – You could do worse, but you could certainly do better. ★★★

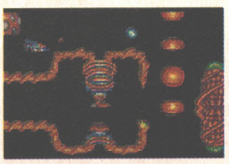
AMIGA ENCOUNTER
Novagen £20.42

Uppers – Very fast and atmospheric. ***Downers*** – It's just *Battlezone* yet again. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good old-fashioned zooming 'n' blasting fun, but it really should have been a budget game. ★★★

ARMOUR-GEDDON
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Lots of tanks, lots of planes, lots of places to go. It's deep and wide and tall. ***Downers*** – Takes a lot of self-discipline to play properly. ***The Bottom Line*** – A natural successor to *Carrier Command*. ★★★★

ARMALYTE
Thalamus £25.99



Uppers – Enjoyable in an old-fashioned sort of way. ***Downers*** – Sloppily presentation and inadequate design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Totally eclipsed by Activision's *R-Type II*. ★★

ARNHEM
CCS £19.95

Uppers – A 8-bit classic wargame finally brought to Amiga owners. ***Downers*** – ...but nobody really wanted it anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Primitive beyond belief – even wargamers should give it a wide berth. ★

A-10 TANK KILLER
Dynamix (Sierra) £35.75

Uppers – A wealth of typical flight sim-style detail. ***Downers*** – Gameplay suffers due to the sluggish frame rate and lack of a real flying 'feel'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A interesting but flawed attempt at taking the flight simulation genre a stage further. ★★★

ATOMINO
Psygnosis £25.99

Uppers – Easy to pick up, with thousands of levels to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Can covalent bonding be fun? We're not sure. Rather samey; very tough; crap music. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slightly similar to *Pipe Mania* in some ways – if you liked that, then try this one for size. ★★★

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Variety, neat animation, some decent jokes. ***Downers*** – But film licences nearly always feel too thin to be worth 25 quid... ***The Bottom Line*** – ...and this one's no different. Fun but slight. ★★★

BABY JO
Loriciels £24.99

Uppers – Sweet Mario-influenced game with barrels of cuteness and lots of simple fun. ***Downers*** – Death by full nappy – yeuch! ***The Bottom Line*** – Lovable and entertaining, if technically a bit on the crap side. Overpriced for what it is, though. ★★

BADLANDS
Tengen (Domark) £19.99

Uppers – A close conversion... ***Downers*** – ...of a crap overhead-view arcade race game. ***The Bottom Line*** – So workmanlike its jeans hang over its arse. ★★

THE BALL GAME
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Based on the excellent but un-released *Infection* puzzle game. ***Downers*** – The concept is spoiled by senseless changes to the rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – Interesting, but ineptly executed. ★★

BATTLE CHESS II – CHINESE CHESS
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Cute graphics, and a new angle on the chess theme. ***Downers*** – The animations soon become tiresome, and Chinese chess isn't half as interesting as the standard game anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good as a showpiece game, but a failure as a piece of playable software. ★★

BATTLE COMMAND
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Loads of missions, atmospheric solid 3D graphics (ie lots of green), plus a good mix of strategy and blasting. ***Downers*** – Takes a while to get into; some odd (and impossible to complete) missions. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the self-discipline to persevere past an uninspiring start, this is a worthy follow-up to the classic *Carrier Command*. ★★★

BEAST BUSTERS
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Graphically close to the original arcade version. ***Downers*** – Tends to slow down when there's a lot happening on screen, and it's far too easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Doesn't really compare too well with all the other *Op Wolf* games on the Amiga. ★★

BIG BUSINESS
Magic Bytes £25.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and a fairly original concept. Would you believe, a 'humorous business simulation'? ***Downers*** – It's true, though the humour is feeble-witted stereotyping, and the business part is tedious number-crunching. ***The Bottom Line*** – Some nice touches, but at the end of the day it just isn't any fun to play at all. ★★

BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
Capstone (Accolade) £24.99

Uppers – In our humble opinion, a most excellent subject for a licence. The game even manages to capture some of the flavour of the bodacious film too. ***Downers*** – But that

doesn't stop it being a strong contender for the 'Weakest Gameplay In The World' award. ***The Bottom Line*** – Something of a missed opportunity. Let's hope for better things of the game of the film sequel... ★★

BILLIARDS II SIMULATOR
Infogrames £25.99

Uppers – Plenty of variations, including a 'crazy pool' with an octagonal table. ***Downers*** – Neither the 2D or 3D modes allow a decent shot to be made, and the 'feel' of the sport is lost completely. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another game which crumbles in the face of its competition, this time in the form of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*. ★★

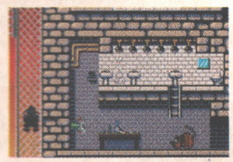
BLADE WARRIOR
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Pretty breathtaking graphics, with plenty of action and puzzling too. ***Downers*** – The gameplay is unlikely to be to everyone's taste. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the most atmospheric game ever. ★★★★

BLUE MAX
Mindscape £34.99

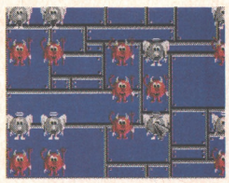
Uppers – Less techie than most flying thangs. Some rather spiffing sound compliments the WWI feel nicely. ***Downers*** – Not a winner in the user-friendliness stakes, and the slow and sloppy main game never (ahem) really takes off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull. *Not* the definitive bi-plane game for Biggles buffs it should have been. ★

THE BLUES BROTHERS
Titus £25.99



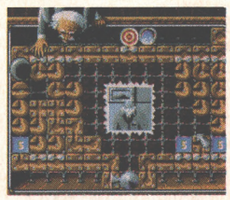
Uppers – So playable its frightening. And it's funny too. ***Downers*** – The two player mode is a wasted opportunity. ***The Bottom Line*** – Probably the best character licence ever to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★

BOOLY
Loriciels £19.99



Uppers – More novel than the average puzzler, and an interesting blend of logic, tactics and luck. ***Downers*** – Possibly requires too much self-discipline to play properly for most people. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fascinating and moderately entertaining, but it's always going to be a minority-appeal kind of thing. ★★★

BOSTON BOMB CLUB
Silmarils £25.99



Uppers – A neat twist on the sliding block type of puzzle game. ***Downers*** – It hasn't got the longest game life ever, and the basic concept won't exactly light everybody's fire. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the better puzzlers we've seen lately. Pleasing, fun and very French. ★★★★

BOTICS
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Nice sound; futuristic graphics. ***Downers*** – Absolutely dire *Pong*-style gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – Get out of here! ★

BRAIN BLASTERS
Ubi Soft £25.99

Uppers – Well, there's a simultaneous two player mode. ***Downers*** – But it's only really remotely playable when played solo. ***The Bottom Line*** – A sad, simplistic and ineffective puzzler. ★

Welcome to The Bottom Line – AMIGA POWER's much imitated but never beaten (as they say) guide to the best (and worst) of the past year's games. Now a massive seven pages long – and constantly updated to cover all the latest releases – you won't find a more comprehensive way of telling what's good and what's bad in Amiga games anywhere. This month the newies include the stunning *Populous II*, the perfectly realised *First Samurai*, the rather gorgeous *Heimdall*, the thrilling *Alien Breed* and the jaw-dropping *MicroProse Golf* amongst many great games – all the potential Xmas chart toppers not reviewed this month you'll find somewhere in here...

THE BOTTOM LINE

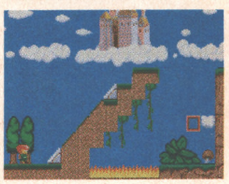
RATINGS: ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Nearly there ★★★★ Very good ★★★ Has its moments ★★ Flawed ★ Dire

BRAT
Image Works £24.99
Uppers – Very pretty, very smooth, very challenging. ***Downers*** – ...and very, very irritating indeed, especially if you hate the central character. ***The Bottom Line*** – Okay if you play it with the sound off. ★★★

BREACH 2
Impressions £24.99
Uppers – Stick with it and you'll find an immensely rewarding space/strategy blast with loads of levels. ***Downers*** – Scrappy graphics and some awkward quirks will deter many. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loved *Laser Squad*? Then you'll probably take a shine to *Breach 2*. ★★

BRIGADE COMMANDER
Electronic Zoo £25.99
Uppers – Desert Storm scenarios give it a nice touch of topicality. ***Downers*** – The usual crap graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Friendlier than the average wargame, and more playable too. ★★★

BUILDERLAND
Loriciels £24.99



Uppers – Interesting and cute *Lemmings* derivative. ***Downers*** – It's written in AMOS, and it shows. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but it's a shame they couldn't have hired someone to program it properly. ★★

CADAVER
Image Works £24.99
Uppers – Gorgeously atmospheric graphics; a good mix of puzzling and hacking. ***Downers*** – One or two irritating moments and it's all a bit lacking in the excitement department. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice blend of 3D graphics and adventuring (but it's not a classic). ★★★

CADAVER – THE PAYOFF
Renegade £16.99

Uppers – A wonderful add-on for fans of the first *Cadaver*. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use for anyone else though. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got the original, this isn't such a bad price to pay for more of the same. ★★★

CAPTAIN PLANET
Mindscape £25.99

Uppers – Um, it's ideologically sound. And the colours are nice. ***Downers*** – Terminally flawed gameplay, and seems to have been put together in a terrible hurry. ***The Bottom Line*** – No fun to play at all, and that's all that matters in the end. Forget it. ★★

THE CARDINAL OF THE KREMLIN
Accolade £24.99
Uppers – Reasonably captivating and accessible strategy. ***Downers*** – Ridiculous arcade sequence dropped slap bang in the middle of the game almost totally destroys the atmosphere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Alarmingly stupid design blows what could have been a winner. ★★

CARTHAGE
Psygnosis £24.99
Uppers – Excellent graphics and some nifty arcade sequences from the masters of slick programming. ***Downers*** – But underneath it's a distinctly average strategy game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Despite appearances, not one for the joystick junkies out there. ★★★

CENTURION
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Fairly interesting management sections with some nifty battle sequences. ***Downers*** – Two appalling arcade sections blow its chances. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unbalanced. ★★

CHALLENGE GOLF
On-Line £24.99
Uppers – Easy to get into, and up to four players catered for. ***Downers*** – Mind-numbingly unrealistic putting sequence, and loads of unnecessary little bugs. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lack of playability makes this a seriously below-par golf sim. Go for *PGA Tour Golf* instead. ★

CHAMPION OF THE RAJ
Image Works £25.99
Uppers – Arcade sequences break up the heavy-duty strategy action. ***Downers*** – Even more ridiculous disk accessing than usual in this type of thing. Crap programming generally. ***The Bottom Line*** – Potentially good game ruined by complete lack of playability. ★

CHAOS IN ANDROMEDA
On-Line £24.99
Uppers – Lots of character interaction and plenty to do. ***Downers*** – Crap fight sequences and tiny graphics. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enjoyable *Ultima*-style adventure slightly spoiled by sloppy programming. Still good fun though. ★★★

CHAOS STRIKES BACK
FTL (Mirrorsoft) £24.99
Uppers – Complex and ingenious puzzles; very user friendly; great sound. ***Downers*** – Slightly old fashioned looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Engrossing role playing adventure using the *Dungeon Master* game system. ★★★★

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
Impressions £29.99
Uppers – Visually impressive wargame, with instant appeal and plenty of user-friendly presentation. ***Downers*** – Things fall down in the wargaming aspect of things, with some rather silly rules. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very brave try, but it doesn't quite reach the heights to which it aspires. ★★★

CHUCK ROCK
Core Design £24.99

Uppers – A first class caveman romp, with some innovation in the gameplay for once. ***Downers*** – A touch shallow and a touch easy. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty brilliant platformer, one of the Amiga's very best. ★★★★

CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER 2.0
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – A veritable air force of planes to fly, with piles of options, missions and the obligatory load of external views. There's even the opportunity to fly the Space Shuttle. ***Downers*** – A complete lack of speed, bad disk access and naff perspective put the dampers on the whole affair. ***The Bottom Line*** – Low flying flight sim – fails to stay with the competition.★★★

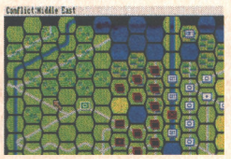
CHIP'S CHALLENGE
US Gold £24.99
Uppers – Lots and lots of levels; typically well thought out console-style gameplay. ***Downers*** – Simplistic graphics; lack of depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but not the most characterful of puzzle games, and not the cheapest either. ★★★

COHORT
Impressions £29.99
Uppers – (Relatively) excellent graphics and helpful user-interface make things accessible. ***Downers*** – The control system isn't as good as it should be. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fine off-beat wargame, but overpriced. ★★

THE COLONEL'S BEQUEST
Sierra £34.99
Uppers – Mildly intriguing whodunit, with that familiar Sierra style of presentation. ***Downers*** – Terrible graphics, hours of tedium. ***The Bottom Line*** – Overpriced and over here. Sierra can do much better than this.★★

COMMANDO
Elite £19.99
Uppers – Lovingly recreated coin-op blast-'em scroller. The game that launched a thousand scrolling war blasters. ***Downers*** – As fashionable as an anorak. ***The Bottom Line*** – Classic stuff, but not a good indication of the Amiga's capabilities. ★★★

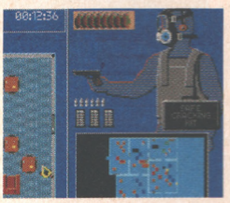
CONFLICT MIDDLE EAST
SSI/US Gold £30.99



Uppers – A wargame in the traditional sense, but executed very well indeed. ***Downers*** – The wargame label is no longer a valid excuse for a program looking so dated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Of limited interest, even to hardened wargamers. ★★★

COUGAR FORCE
Tomahawk £19.99
Uppers – The box is quite interesting (actually that's a bit of a lie). ***Downers*** – Everything. The sound, the graphics, the gameplay – all dire in the extreme. ***The Bottom Line*** – A perfect present for pyromaniacs. ★

COVERT ACTION
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Lots of atmosphere and some excellent sub-games. ***Downers*** – Could have been better programmed, could have had much better controls, and could have beem £10 cheaper. ***The Bottom Line*** – Surprisingly playable and enjoyable, but with just a little user-friendliness this would have been an absolute classic. ★★★

CRIME DOES NOT PAY
Titus £25.95
Uppers – Er... reasonable(ish) graphics? ***Downers*** – Terrible gameplay, pathetic humour, atrocious design, useless plot... shall we go on? I think not. ***The Bottom Line*** – Crime doesn't pay. This game is a software crime, so work it out for yourself. ★

CRIME WAVE
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – Gore galore; the numerous video interludes spice it up a bit. ***Downers*** – The actual game is dull in the extreme, and the waiting between levels is monstrous. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bog-standard blast-'em-up with knobs on. ★

CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
Delphine/US Gold £27.99
Uppers – Superbly-designed plot, lovely graphics, and the usual compulsive quality you expect from Delphine. ***Downers*** – Loads (and loads) of disk-accessing, and even when you've got the solution it

seemingly takes eight hours to play it through to the end. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not flawless, but still an absolutely lovely game, and a worthy companion to *Monkey Island*. ★★★★★

CYBERCON III
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant sense of 'being there', and better Freescape than Freescape. ***Downers*** – Predictably, not all that accessible to your average game player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Well worth the effort of getting into. ★★★★★

DARKMAN
Ocean £25.99
Uppers – The driving section is imaginative and fun. ***Downers*** – Everything else is hackneyed, licence-by-numbers rubbish. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not quite as bad as *Total Recall* and *Nightbreed*, but not very much better either. The worst film game for quite some time. ★★

DAS BOOT
Mindscape £29.99
Uppers – The most accessible sub sim to date. ***Downers*** – ...but that still doesn't make it particularly accessible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Playable, but overpriced. The best in its field. ★★★

DEATH KNIGHTS OF KRYNN
SSI / US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A great improvement on the previous 'Krynn' role-players. ***Downers*** – But compared to the mighty *Eye Of The Beholder*, this is very average indeed. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough product, but nothing very spectacula. ★★★

DEUTEROS
Activision £25.99
Uppers – An incredibly huge and absorbing game, with challenges that seem perfectly paced to be in tune with the developing game-skills of the average player. ***Downers*** – Visually it can be a bit of a yawn. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't be fooled by the strategy exterior – this is a game that everyone should try. ★★★★★

DINO WARS
Magic Bytes £25.99
Uppers – A novel chess variant, including a great 'two players at once' option where you don't have to wait for the other player to move. ***Downers*** – The central beat-'em-up section is a bit crap, and the game as a whole is over-simplistic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice idea, but asking £25 for it is a bit of a cheek – there just isn't enough to it. ★★

DISC
Loriciel £24.99
Uppers – A few nice graphical touches. ***Downers*** – Appallingly-designed gameplay with very little actual action.***The Bottom Line*** – A crappy *Discs Of Tron* rip-off without most of the original's good features. ★

DISCOVERY
Micro Illusions £25.99
Uppers – Good graphics for an educational game. ***Downers*** – For a game which relies heavily on speech synthesis, the speech quality is terrible. ***The Bottom Line*** – Tricky to play and educationally dubious, this is a bit of a flop. ★★

DRAGONS OF FLAME
SSI (US Gold) £24.99
Uppers – Almost instant playability – not something you'd expect from a role playing game. ***Downers*** – A bit simplistic for real all the real Dungeons & Dragons fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent introduction to the new bread of fantasy RPGs. ★★★

DRAGON'S LAIR II
Readysoft £44.95
Uppers – Really incredibly gorgeous cartoon graphics. ***Downers*** – Minimal player interaction and a ridiculous price tag. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not the best value game in the world. ★★

ECO PHANTOMS
Electronic Zoo £25.99
Uppers – A nice line in H.G.Wells sci-fi theatrics and some unusual sub-sections give *Eco Phantoms* a highly original flavour. ***Downers*** – The parts don't actually add up to very much, and the copy protection system could induce bouts of violence. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable 3D routine masquerading as a game. ★

EDD THE DUCK
Impulze £24.99
Uppers – *Rainbow Islands*-inspired gameplay ensures some level of interest. ***Downers*** – But the whole thing just doesn't inspire, and the difficulty is placed too high for a young audience. ***The Bottom Line*** – Your granny might buy you one. ★★

ELF
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – An excellent arcade adventure romp, with enough interesting little extras to make it fresh. ***Downers*** – These things are getting just a little bit old-fashioned, aren't they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A good solid game from the Ocean stable, but not a world beater. ★★★★

ELVIRA – MISTRESS OF THE DARK
Accolade £24.99

Uppers – Elvira's gorgeous; the graphics really draw the player in. ***Downers*** – Pity the game itself is nigh on impossible – and it takes five disks! ***The Bottom Line*** – Falls apart due to disk swapping and infuriating gameplay. A real pity ★★

EMLYN HUGHES' ARCADE QUIZ
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Just like a pub quiz machine... ***Downers*** – ...but with Emlyn Hughes in it (and no real cash prizes). ***The Bottom Line*** – Oh dear. ★

E-SWAT
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – As conversions go, it's not a complete nightmare... ***Downers*** – ...but let's be honest, the arcade original was duff, duff, duff. ***The Bottom Line*** – A reasonable conversion of a terminally average game.Don't bother ★

EUROPEAN SUPERLEAGUE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – A surprisingly involving footy strategy thing in the *Football Manager* vein. ***Downers*** – They're not still making these things are they? ***The Bottom Line*** – A dated idea – it sounds tedious but it's actually executed quite commendably. ★★

EXILE
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Real-world physics incorporated into an arcade game; it's more of a true arcade adventure than most games bearing that tag. ***Downers*** – Rather primitive graphics, and not the most instantly playable game ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great arcade adventure, but it might not be your cup of tea if you're an action fan. STOP PRESS: Voted reviewers game of the year! ★★★★★

EXTERMINATOR
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Very original (read 'very, very odd indeed') arcade thing, well converted to retain the original's feel. ***Downers*** – Confusing initially, but once you've played it for a while it's...confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great fun, but it doesn't really make it in the longevity stakes. ★★★

THE EXECUTIONER
Hawk £25.99

Uppers – A playable enough *Thrust*-variant, with one or two extra bits tacked on (such as the tasteful torture scenes). ***Downers*** – The core of the game just isn't exciting or different enough to give *The Executioner* that 'one more go' appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine if you don't mind the slightly repetitive gameplay, and significant lack of action. ★★

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
SSI (US Gold) £29.99

Uppers – Takes *Dungeon Master* a step further. Excellent atmosphere and graphics. ***Downers*** – Despite being better than *DM*, it's not as different as it should have been.There's still room for improvment in the D&D genre. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the best D&D game yet for the Amiga. (Or, indeed, for anything else). ★★★★★

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Graphics to make you gasp, sound effects to get your adrenalin pumping and gameplay to leave you in a quivering heap on the floor. ***Downers*** – Despite the shoot-'em-up nature of things, it can all be a touch too much for the less ambitious games player. ***The Bottom Line*** – Quite possibly the last word in flight sims (so far, anyway). ★★★★★

FATE – GATES OF DAWN
Rainbow Arts £29.99

Uppers – "Unbelievably horny women", unusual presentation and more to do than some so-called RPG games. ***Downers*** – Fiddly control and tatty presentation. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just another FRPG really, but with enough character to make it worthwhile. Far from essential though. ★★★

FIGHTING SOCCER
Activision £24.99

Uppers – The coin-op was mildly amusing(ish). ***Downers*** – You are accused of producing an utterly dull game of the lowest calibre. How do you plead? ***The Bottom Line*** – Guilty as hell. ★

FINAL FIGHT
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – Context-sensitive controls, huge sprites, arcade-true graphics, generally an excellent conversion. ***Downers*** – Then again it's a conversion of a fairly dull, and quite dated, formulaic coin-op. And the beat-'em-up is looking a little long in the tooth these days. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically impressive and loads of fun to play, this might even knock the famous *IK+* off its 'best Amiga beat-'em-up' perch. (But then again it might not). ★★★★

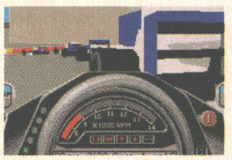
FIRST SAMURAI
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Stunningly well-programmed, imaginative design and inspired use of sound, all added to a classic and proven gameplay style. ***Downers*** – Maybe just a little on the slow side. ***The Bottom Line*** – Simply gorgeous arcade adventure that you really shouldn't be without. ★★★★★

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR II
D&H £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably complex and wide-ranging strategy bash. ***Downers*** – £25 for a footie management game? Get real. ***The Bottom Line*** – Adds nothing new to the decades-old number-crunching of every other football manager game ever. ★★

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX
MicroProse £34.99



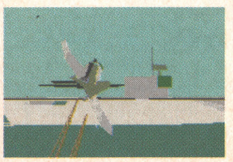
Uppers – Breathtakingly detailed 3D and the finest driving feel yet seen on the Amiga. ***Downers*** – The prospect of such an accurate Grand Prix simulation isn't going to appeal to everyone. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best racing game we've ever seen, and probably the best game to appear on the Amiga. ★★★★★

FLAMES OF FREEDOM – MIDWINTER II
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – There's loads to do, and the whole thing looks lovely. Hours of fun to be had from the character-designing section alone. ***Downers*** – Lots of stupid holes in the logic, and an uncomfortable balance between the strategy and action aspects. ***The Bottom Line*** – Works better in theory than in practice. *Midwinter* fans will love it, but the rest of us are likely to get very bored very quickly. ★★★★

FLIGHT OF THE INTRUDER
Image Works £30.99

Uppers – Highly realistic and flexible (you can make it almost as simple as you want), and decent graphics too. ***Downers*** – It's not immediately



attractive by any means, and the controls are even more forbidding than usual. Bugged, too. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not technically amazing, but absorbing and entertaining, with a neat two-player link-up game. ★★★★

FRENETIC
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Fast and good-looking. ***Downers*** – You've seen this all before, and done rather more excitingly into the bargain. ***The Bottom Line*** – Slick programming only serves to make *Frenetic* tedious in a professional kind of a way. ★★

GALAXY FORCE II
Activision £24.99

Uppers – An ambitious attempt at a visually stunning coin-op. ***Downers*** – Everything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you know you can't do it why bother trying? ★

GARFIELD – THE WINTER'S TAIL
The Edge £24.99

Uppers – Brilliant Jim Davis graphics. ***Downers*** – Crappy Steve Davis gameplay. ***The Bottom Line*** – What a wasted licence. For die-hard fans only. ★

GAUNTLET III
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – A new angle on the arcade classic gives some novelty value, and makes proceedings sufficiently different this time around. ***Downers*** – The pace is ponderous, there aren't enough baddies, and the speech is badly missed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but it doesn't really live up to the legend that is *Gauntlet*. Give us a bash on *Gauntlet 2*, anyday. ★★★

GAZZA II
Empire £24.99

Uppers – Gazza doesn't actually appear in the game much. ***Downers*** – Juddering sprites, poor control (just like the man himself), terrible sound – take your pick. ***The Bottom Line*** – It's enough to reduce you to tears. ★

GEISHA
Tomahawk £25.99

Uppers – Um, well, you *do* get to see some girls' bits. (Sorry, female readers). ***Downers*** – Tacky and fatuous 'plot', giving way to some of the most unplayable sub-games ever, with presentation of a kind that people used to get arrested for. A nightmare all round really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could this perhaps be the worst full-price game ever reviewed in AMIGA POWER? A five percent mark would seem to suggest so... ★

GEM'X
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, exquisite sound, beautifully simple mental torture. ***Downers*** – Won't change your mind if you're not into puzzlers. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best puzzle games to date. ★★★★

GERM CRAZY
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Not quite as expensive as Mindscape's *Life & Death*. ***Downers*** – But with little else in its favour. ***The Bottom Line*** – Another half-baked idea, not followed through properly. (Where do they all come from?) ★

GENGHIS KHAN
Infogrames £39.99

Uppers – Stylish and fairly deep historical strategy game. ***Downers*** – Ridiculously expensive though, and requires a fair dose of manual reading. ***The Bottom Line*** – A bit of a cliché, but 'good if you like that sort of thing.' ★★★

GHOST BATTLE
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – The sound's quite good and the graphics are okay. ***Downers*** – Everything else is utterly awful. ***The Bottom Line*** – Badly-designed and executed *Ghosts'n'Goblins* clone that's so bad it's scary. ★

GODS
Renegade £25.53

Uppers – Lovely aesthetics, quite involved for a platform game. ***Downers*** – Not quite as good as it's made out to be. And those graphics are far too clever for their own good. ***The Bottom Line*** – Don't believe the hype, but pretty damn good all the same. ★★★★

GRAND PRIX MASTER
Dinamic £19.95

Uppers – Endorsed by Jorge Martinez (apparently famous on the 80cc motorcycle circuit). ***Downers*** – Handles like a Reliant Robin. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not to put too fine a point on it, useless. ★

GUNBOAT
Accolade £29.99

Uppers – A sim which actually does something different. ***Downers*** – The action doesn't really convey enough excitement, and the graphics are a little on the primitive side. ***Bottom Line*** – A highly complex sim, this takes quite some time to get drawn into. ★★★

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Almost unlimited lastability, thanks to the huge numbers of scenarios. ***Downers*** – Off-puttingly complicated, and offers nothing new to the unconverted. ***Bottom Line*** – Well put together, but still strictly for diehards. ★★

HAMMERFIST
Activision £24.99

Uppers – Graphically adept arcade adventure with tons of playability and plenty to keep you going. ***Downers*** – Iffy sound. ***The Bottom Line*** – Thoroughly enjoyable (if you like that sort of thing). ★★★

HARD DRIVIN' II
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Refined version of the original – less bugs, a track editor, a neat 'head-to-head' option if you link two machines... ***Downers*** – ...but still glitchy and not a patch on the arcade machine. ***The Bottom Line*** – Souped up, but not souped up enough. ★★

HEART OF THE DRAGON
Avatar Computing £25.99

Uppers – Lots of colours, and an (almost serious) attempt to do something new with the fantasy beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Beyond the almost impressive technical trickery lies not very much at all really. ***The Bottom Line*** – If your friend has bought it, give it a go. Then laugh very heartily at him. Entertaining in an embarrassing sort of way. ★

HEIMDALL
Core Design £30.99

Uppers – Stunningly pretty and atmospheric, and it's absolutely enormous too. The cartoon-style is just gorgeous. ***Downers*** – Some nasty disk swapping and accessing, though not quite to Cinemaware 'standards'. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fast-moving and slick RPG game that's miles more accessible than the genre usually is. A winner. ★★★★★

HERO QUEST
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Easy to get into, and deceptively addictive. You don't think you've been playing it for long, but suddenly it's Thursday and you're a week late for dinner. ***Downers*** – Not so good as a one-player game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Perhaps surprisingly, a highly entertaining game, and absolutely ideal when you've got game-playing friends round. ★★★★

HERO QUEST: RETURN OF THE WITCHLORD
Gremlin £14.99

Uppers – An add-on module for fans of the original *Hero Quest* who want to take their characters into harder territory. ***Downers*** – Not a lot of use to anybody else, but that's a bit inevitable. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *Hero Quest*, then this is an obvious (and fairly inexpensive) purchase. ★★★★

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HILL STREET BLUES
Krisalis £24.99
Uppers – A good feel for the TV series; characters (both player and others) that you can identify with. It's certainly an interesting way to handle a licence. ***Downers*** – Gets repetitive pretty quickly, and it's not the slickest game around. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good next step for someone who's played *Sim City* to death and fancies a new challenge. Limited appeal, though. ★★★

HORROR ZOMBIES FROM THE CRYPT
Millennium £24.99
Uppers – Unusual idea; suitably spooky graphics. ***Downers*** – But let down by the dull platform nature of the game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Funny to watch, but fairly average to play. ★★

HUDSON HAWK
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – A film licence which actually stands up as a game in its own right. ***Downers*** – The control system can reduce some to tears, and it doesn't match *The Blues Brothers* in the arcade adventure/platform stakes. ***The Bottom Line*** – A well produced, but infuriatingly difficult game. Try before you buy. ★★★★

HUNTER
Activision £25.99

Uppers – Stunning 3D graphics and loads to do. ***Downers*** – The odd little graphical glitch or two. ***Bottom Line*** – Enormously absorbing game – you'll find yourself completely captivated by it for hours on end. ★★★★★

INDIANA JONES ADVENTURE
US Gold £19.99
Uppers – More fine-tuning gives *Indy* the friendliest control system yet. It's pretty faithful to the movie too! ***Downers*** – Waiting for Indy to trek across the screen all the time can get annoying and some of the puzzles are just a wee bit too abstract. ***The Bottom Line*** – One of the best Amiga adventures available. ★★★★

INDIANAPOLIS 500
Electronic Arts £24.95
Uppers – An immensely playable blend of true racing sim and quick track blast, with a nice line in remote camera views (if you've got a 1 meg machine). ***Downers*** – Track repetition hinders lasting appeal. ***The Bottom Line*** – Just fabulous. ★★★★★

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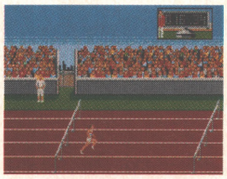


Uppers – Tons of fun for those who miss the days of joystick waggling. ***Downers*** – Terrible presentation, and a highly questionable price. ***The Bottom Line*** – If only it had been a tenner cheaper... ★★★

I PLAY 3D SOCCER
Simulmondo £25.99
Uppers – The most dynamic and visually convincing representation of the sport yet. ***Downers*** – The realism is so high that you hardly ever get to kick the ball, and the 3D display system can be downright confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately flawed. ★★

IRON LORD
Ubi Soft £24.99
Uppers – Cinemaware-style medieval epic with plenty of sub-games and atmospheric presentation. ***Downers*** – It's just too tough for most, and with little real depth. ***The Bottom Line*** – Ultimately repetitive, but fun for a while. ★★

ISHIDO
Accolade £24.99
Uppers – Take *Othello*, add some *Go*, then throw in a few herbs and spices and heat until brown. The result is one piping hot Chinese board game called *Ishido*. ***Downers*** – Irritating dialogue boxes, and the luck element can infuriate. ***The Bottom Line*** – An engaging piece of Chinese culture, which should really be played with a good strong cup of tea. ★★

JAHANGIR KHAN'S CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH
Krisalis £25.53
Uppers – Easy to play, closely adheres to the rules of the real thing, and there's plenty of options on offer. ***Downers*** – There's not really a lot you can do with a squash game, is there? ***The Bottom Line*** – The best squash game around for the Amiga. (Not that there's much in the way of competition). ★★★

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER
Virgin £24.99

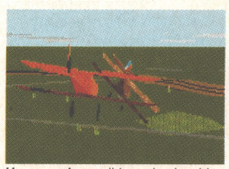
Uppers – Stunning 3D camera-style view on the action, and the actual rules and physical mechanics of the game are re-created beautifully. ***Downers*** – Well, it's still only snooker. Some extra stats would have been nice too. ***Bottom Line*** – A veritable corker. A classic. A 90 percenter. Need we say more? ★★★★★

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin £24.99
Uppers – Two ancient sub-games offer a real rave from the grave. ***Downers*** – Another *Judge Dredd* game screwed up totally. No humour, no graphics, no game. ***The Bottom Line*** – One day somebody will do justice (ahem) to the legend of Dredd. One day. ★

JUPITER'S MASTERDRIVE
Ubi Soft £24.99
Uppers – Surprisingly playable race game. More fun than a packet of Jammy Dodgers. ***Downers*** – Unspectacular and overpriced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not sure why, but it really is jolly good fun. ★★

KEEF THE THIEF
Electronic Arts £24.99
Uppers – Excellent hack, slash and puzzle solving with some superb stylised graphics. ***Downers*** – It still plays like your average role-playing adventure. ***The Bottom Line*** – Respectable Tolkien-esque fare. ★★★

KNIGHTS OF THE SKY
MicroProse £34.99



Uppers – Accessible and enjoyable to play, in a not-very-flight-simmy kind of way. ***Downers*** – Erm, well, there aren't quite as many buttons as some flight sims. ***The Bottom Line*** – Much more playable than you might expect, this is the surprise hit of the year in the AMIGA POWER office. ★★★★★

THE KILLING CLOUD
Image Works £24.99
Uppers – Fast-moving and pretty graphics, bags of depth, and a great creation of atmosphere. ***Downers*** – Riddled with inconsistencies. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could have been a contender, but badly lets itself down in the logic stakes. ★★★

KING'S BOUNTY
New World Computing £25.99
Uppers – Accessible and tidily presented, and far more playable for the non-expert than anything in this field we've seen. ***Downers*** – Nothing beyond the fact that some people won't ever get to grips with this sort of game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Superb D&D-style adventure that's fun for everyone but the most narrow of mind. ★★★★

KING'S QUEST V
Sierra £39.99

Uppers – Beautiful digitised graphics and a very friendly point and click interface. ***Downers*** – The price is one obvious downside, and only hard drive owners should bother. ***The Bottom Line*** – A mighty impressive adventure, which takes Sierra to new heights. ★★★★

LAST NINJA 2
System 3 £24.99
Uppers – Excellent 3D isometric graphics and a genuine attempt to inject some strategy into the martial arts genre. ***Downers*** – The game just isn't cohesive, and it plays like a pig. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not really in the Bruce Lee league (barely scraping Jackie Chan level to be honest). ★★

LANCASTER
Actual Screenshots £24.95
Uppers – Fairly impressive 3D polygon graphics. ***Downers*** – Lack of variation and any real excitement means it barely gets off the ground. ***The Bottom Line*** – Elevates averageness to an art form. ★★

LAST NINJA 3
System 3 £25.99

Uppers – Polished presentation and big improvements in look, feel and plot in the ninja's third outing. ***Downers*** – A diabolical control system and one or two flaws in execution prove major irritations. ***The Bottom Line*** – For those who go for these beat-'em-up adventures, *Last Ninja 3* is heaven sent. Others will wish to give it a wide berth. ★★★★

LEISURE SUIT LARRY III
Sierra £34.99
Uppers – Ridiculous, over-sexed plot. Adventuring for consenting adults. ***Downers*** – Slightly obtrusive command parser, and as usual it's over-priced. ***The Bottom Line*** – Check it out – but only if you are over eighteen. ★★★

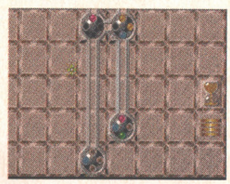
LEMMINGS
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Utterly bizarre, pleasingly original and totally addictive. Invents a totally new category – the save-'em-up. ***Downers*** – As is the norm with such strikingly original concepts, some may wonder just what all the fuss is about. ***The Bottom Line*** – Love it or loathe it, you can't ignore it. *Lemmings* rule. ★★★★★

LIFE AND DEATH
Mindscape £25.53
Uppers – Excellent packaging (the surgical mask and gloves are wild), and some fairly amusing gameplay keeps things on the boil for a couple of hours. ***Downers*** – Repetition soon sets in – as a long-term challenge it all falls apart quite alarmingly. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is quite good, but there's just not enough of it. ★★

LIVING JIGSAWS
Miles Computing £24.99
Uppers – Likely to appeal to the younger Amiga users. ***Downers*** – Unlikely to appeal to anybody else, anywhere. ***The Bottom Line*** – Lacks any charm whatsoever. Quite silly and pointless all round, really. ★

LOGICAL
Rainbow Arts £19.99



Uppers – The ease of play makes this a nicely accessible puzzler. ***Downers*** – But the amount of time each move takes also makes it a seriously tedious one. ***The Bottom Line*** – In a crowded world of puzzle games, *Logical* is very blunt in the mustard area. ★★

LORDS OF CHAOS
Blade £24.99
Uppers – Great control system, comprehensive and logical. Lots of levels equal great lastability. ***Downers*** – Very little action; not much compulsion to reach your rather abstract goal. ***The Bottom Line*** – A disappointing game from Julian Gollop, not up to his usual standard. Wait for *Laser Squad 2*. ★★★

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE II
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, lashings of speed and that hard-to-capture driving atmosphere. ***Downers*** – The lack of crashes is a bit silly, and some track maps would have helped. ***The Bottom Line*** – The best sprite-based driving game we've seen. ★★★★★

LUPO ALBERTO
Idea £25.53
Uppers – Charming characters, a terribly translated manual, and goofy gameplay make it ideal for kids of all ages. ***Downers*** – The animation is funny for all the wrong reasons. Loveable but really rather crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – A game sure to cause argument. A case of try before you buy. ★★

MAGIC POCKETS
Renegade £25.99
Uppers – The usual Bitmap standards of technical excellence, and a veritable mountain of clever ideas. ***Downers*** – The graphics don't suit the game style, the design is too clever for its own good, and the pacing is hopelessly wrong. ***The Bottom Line*** – It'll sell a million, but everyone we've met finds it seriously boring. As a cute arcade platform game it's a disaster. ★★★

MANCHESTER UNITED EUROPE
Krisalis £25.99

Uppers – Fast, pretty, and hugely playable. ***Downers*** – The strategy section is largely superficial (and what there is is optional). ***Bottom Line*** – Great control makes this just about the best football sim so far. ★★★★

MAUPITI ISLAND
Lankhor £25.99

Uppers – Pleasantly different, with loads of character interaction. ***Downers*** – Just too small to really justify the price. ***Bottom Line*** – Charming and interesting, but there just isn't enough of it. ★★★

MEGA LO MANIA
Image Works £30.99

Uppers – Brilliant sound effects, gorgeous speech, jolly nice graphics, completely compulsive gameplay. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a tad frustrating at times. ***The Bottom Line*** – The most accessible and arguably the most enjoyable god-sim to date. ★★★★★

MEGA TRAVELLER 1
Empire £30.64
Uppers – Terrifying depth, friendly and helpful controls, great atmosphere, excellent balance of strategy and action. ***Downers*** – It might all seem a bit too familiar to *Elite* players; occasional long disk-access pauses can irritate. ***The Bottom Line*** – A wonderful piece of role-playing software that everyone should play at least once. After that, you're unlikely to want to stop. ★★★★

MERCS
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Faithful conversion of the coin-op, good-looking and fast-moving... ***Downers*** – ...but still just another *Commando* clone. ***The***

Bottom Line – Great at what it does, but you're likely to want rather more from a game in this day and age. ★★★

METAL MUTANT
Silmarils £25.99

Uppers – A simple concept (exploration, fighting and puzzle solving) which works well, and has a perfect difficulty curve. ***Downers*** – Lacking any really exciting features, and too simple for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A middle-of-the-road game, which achieves what it sets out to do, but doesn't really astound. ★★★

MICROPROSE GOLF
MicroProse £34.99

Uppers – Looks wonderful, and just about every conceivable variation of golf is covered. ***Downers*** – Seriously overpriced, can be a bit uninvolving, and the graphical 'fog' is unfortunate and disappointing. ***The Bottom Line*** – A great golf game which just fails to match up to the standard set by *PGA Tour*. ★★★★

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Well-balanced gameplay with a smooth difficulty curve makes it stand out from a hundred similar coin-op conversions. Actually more playable than the arcade original. ***Downers*** – Control is awkward at first; could be a touch faster. ***The Bottom Line*** – Best of its type. ★★★

MIGHTY BOMB JACK
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Classic gameplay with added 16-bit features like, erm, power-ups. ***Downers*** – Sprawling levels lose the original's frantic urgency. ***The Bottom Line*** – Dull, dull, and then again dull. Did we mention it was dull? ★

MIG-29
Domark £29.99

Uppers – So real you'll be be hanging pictures of Gorby on your wall. ***Downers*** – Only five missions, with little in the way of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but ultimately just too techie for most Amiga owners. ★★★

MIG 29M SUPER FULCRUM
Domark £39.99

Uppers – For the serious minded flight sim fans, *MiG29M* offers a superior trip, which manages to avoided cloning its predecessor. ***Downers*** – Way short of its competitors in areas such as ground detail and instant action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive, but fans of the original won't be disappointed. ★★★★

MONOPOLY
Leisure Genius £19.99

Uppers – A faithful version of the classic (to say the least) board-game. ***Downers*** – Who the hell wants to play a board-game on their computer anyway? ***The Bottom Line*** – Competently done, but arguably quite pointless. ★★

MONSTER BUSINESS
Eclipse £19.99

Uppers – Tons of character and classically simple *Dig Dug*-meets-*Snow Bros* gameplay make this endless fun for nostalgic arcade fans. Great music too, and a halfway-decent price tag. ***Downers*** – Once more, 'simple arcade fun' translates directly as 'shallow and transient kiddie rubbish' for some. ***The Bottom Line*** – A superb arcade platform game with more life in it than a hundred copies of *Magic Pockets*. ★★★★

MOONBASE
Mindscape £35.99

Uppers – Entertaining and addictive game in the best *Sim City* tradition. ***Downers*** – Just a bit too close to *Sim City* for comfort, though. ***Bottom Line*** – Fairly short-term entertainment, and more than a touch overpriced. ★★★

MOONSHINE RACERS
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Erm, great hillbilly music. ***Downers*** – Slow, graphically horrible, totally derivative. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as bad as Amiga *Chase HQ*, and you've got to admit that's pretty damn bad. ★

MUDS
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Quite funny. ***Downers*** – Do we really need another rugby/basketball/ violence-based future sport? ***The Bottom Line*** – Giving everything silly names doesn't make this game different to the dozen others it's just the same as. ★★

'NAM
Domark £24.95

Uppers – Heavily researched, convincing and (dirty word) educational strategic war game. ***Downers*** – Very hard to win, the whole serious look to the thing could be a turn off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Political as well as tactical decision making gives a new dimension to war games. ★★★

NARC
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Great blood-spattering action; very close to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Very dodgy on the playability front (not to say morally). ***The Bottom Line*** – Limited. ★★

NARCO POLICE
Dinamic £24.99

Uppers – Looks excellent. ***Downers*** – Computer takes a 'creative' attitude towards obeying control commands. ***The Bottom Line*** – Loud and action-packed blaster for expert commandos. ★★

NAVY SEALS
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – Quite good fun in a mindless arcade runaround sort of way. ***Downers*** – Technically unimpressive (to say the least), and there's very little to it. ***Bottom Line*** – Looks like an ST port, but if you can forget you paid £25 for it, it's pretty enjoyable. ★★

NEBULUS 2 – POGO A-GO-GO
21st Century Entertainment £25.99

Uppers – The winning formula of the original is at the core of the game. ***Downers*** – The addition of power ups ruins the beautiful simplicity which made the first such a classic. ***The Bottom Line*** – A real waste. This is the worst kind of sequel, one which just regurgitates the ideas of its predecessor, but in a far less playable way. ★★★★

NAPOLEON 1
Internecine £29.99

Uppers – Historically accurate and all that kind of stuff – Boney fanatics will love it. ***Downers*** – ...but everyone else will be left completely cold. There's no attempt made to make the game accessible, it's purely for those who already know they're going to buy it before they even see it. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you don't love the concept immediately, give this an extra-wide berth. ★★

NINJA WARRIORS
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Novel 'Cinemascope'-esque screen layout. Dynamic Loading System is a boon but doesn't get rid of irritating swapping. ***Downers*** – Extremely repetitive action palls quickly. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even for a game of this type, the gameplay is too limited to hold the attention for any length of time. ★★

NITRO
Psygnosis £24.99

Uppers – Groovy graphics, smooth scrolling, excellent car-handling. ***Downers*** – A practically infinite-credit system means the game has little sense of urgency. You have to guess the course on later levels. ***The Bottom Line*** – Needs more in the way of immediate danger to be addictive, but (unlike many similar games) is as fun in one player mode as with a couple of chums. ★★★

OBITUS
Psygnosis £34.99

Uppers – Intro would make a great Amiga *Deathchase* game. ***Downers*** – *Obitus* itself is a dull *Dungeon Master* rip-off. ***The Bottom Line*** – Boring and ridiculously priced. ★★

ONSLAUGHT
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – Lovely sound and music; lots of depth. ***Downers*** – Very confusing graphics and gameplay, and the main sequences are technically below the level of your average budget game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Caught between the two stools of wargaming and platform zap games, this isn't a very good example of either. ★★

OPERATION THUNDERBOLT
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – Utterly mindless genocidal slaughterfest; perhaps the best *Op Wolf* style game to date. ***Downers*** – More of the coin-op's appeal is down to the cabinet-mounted Uzi than you might think, leaving the Amiga version somewhat 'flat'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Everything you could expect a conversion of *Operation Thunderbolt* to be. ★★★

OUTRUN EUROPA
US Gold £24.95

Uppers – A vast improvement on earlier *OutRun* games, and the use of different vehicles adds spice. ***Downers*** – The driving feel isn't as good as it might have been and the levels aren't sufficiently different. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class driving act, but its fails to compete with the likes of *Lotus II*. ★★★★

PGA TOUR GOLF
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Excellently presented, comprehensive, and easy as pie to get into. ***Downers*** – There's a limited amount of scope to any golf game, and *PGA* doesn't even try to transcend it. ***The Bottom Line*** – The pinnacle of Amiga golf so far. ★★★★★

PEGASUS
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Two different genres for your money – *Rastan*-type slasher and *R-Type*-ish shoot-'em-up. ***Downers*** – Neither game style is very well executed. ***The Bottom Line*** – Unexciting and generally totally average game seriously lacking in character. ★★★

PIT-FIGHTER
Domark £24.99

Uppers – Interesting and distinctive looking beat-'em-up. ***Downers*** – The 3D effect and digitised sprites aren't entirely convincing, and gameplay very shallow. ***The Bottom Line*** – A close conversion of a pretty thin arcade game. ★★

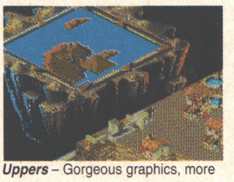
POLICE QUEST 2
Sierra (Activision) £34.95

Uppers – Er, very realistic sim of a policeman's lot. ***Downers*** – ie half the game is form-filling. ***The Bottom Line*** – Too much like a tedious day at the office. ★★

POPULOUS
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – Totally unique gameplay and smooth 3D isometric graphics add up to a game with depth and sparkle. ***Downers*** – The icon control system really is very confusing. ***The Bottom Line*** – An essential for all open-minded Amiga owners. ★★★★★

POPULOUS II
Electronic Arts £30.99



Uppers – Gorgeous graphics, more options and variety than before, and superbly paced action. ***Downers*** – It's really not all that different from the first game at all, more of a serious update than anything else. ***The Bottom Line*** – An absolutely wonderful game, the only flaw in which is the similarity to its predecessor. If you didn't buy *Populous*, though, don't even think about missing this. ★★★★★

THE POWER
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Heaps of levels and a screen designer keep lasting appeal up, and the music is excellent. ***Downers*** – A touch derivative, and lacks that indefinable something that makes a puzzle game great. ***The Bottom Line*** – Try before you buy – you might like it, but rather average to our eyes. ★★★

POWER DRIFT
Activision £19.99

Uppers – All the arcade's tracks, characters, and secret features. ***Downers*** – The graphics can get very confusing, and the gameplay isn't really that close to the original. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good stab at a very difficult conversion, but not quite good enough. ★★★

PP HAMMER AND HIS PNEUMATIC WEAPON
Demonware £25.53

Uppers – Nicely old-fashioned platform action. Plenty of scope for double entrendres too. ***Downers*** – Annoying niggles and a tendency towards over-complication spoil it a bit. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good, but it could easily have been a lot better. ★★★

PREHISTORIK
Titus £25.53

Uppers – Some excellent cartoon graphics and humorous touches make it an instantly likeable game. ***Downers*** – Suffers in comparison to *Toki* and *Chuck Rock*. Needs a number of rough edges polishing up. ***The Bottom Line*** – A nice enough little caveman romp, but it's not really an essential purchase. ★★★

PREDATOR 2
Image Works £25.99

Uppers – Lots and lots of zapping to be done and, er, that's about it really. ***Downers*** – Poor colour choice, unimaginative gameplay, bad control feel. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not as good as *Operation Wolf*, and now some £18 more expensive. Don't bother. ★★

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund £24.99

Uppers – Phenomenal animation, loads of atmosphere and some good old-fashioned gameplay. ***Downers*** – Control is initially tricky, and getting sent to the start of a level every time you die is always annoying. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically stunning and great fun at the same time. Why can't all games be like this? ★★★★★

PROFLIGHT
Hi Soft £39.95

Uppers – Terrifyingly accurate – possibly the most accurate flight simulator ever. ***Downers*** – Such a good simulator that there isn't really room for any game at all. ***Bottom Line*** – Miles too realistic to be any fun to play. Still, it's less expensive than a real flying lesson. ★★

PRO TENNIS TOUR 2
Ubi Soft £24.99

Uppers – Possibly the most realistic sports sim to grace the Amiga, with features galore. ***Downers*** – So if you hate the real thing, you won't go for this. ***The Bottom Line*** – Nothing short of wonderful. ★★★★

PURSUIT TO EARTH
Exocet £19.95

Uppers – Reminiscent of *Gyruss*, the classic arcade zapper. ***Downers*** – But completely crap. ***The Bottom Line*** – About as much fun as getting hit by a real Exocet. ★

QUEST FOR GLORY II – TRIAL BY FIRE
Sierra £40.85

Uppers – Sorry, can't think of any. Oh no, wait, you *do* get lots of disks for your money. ***Downers*** – But no game to put on them. Incompetently programmed, dreadfully-designed, staggeringly-overpriced trash. ***The Bottom Line*** – Possibly the worst Amiga fantasy role-playing game you will ever see. Avoid it like an bad-tempered tiger with toothache. ★

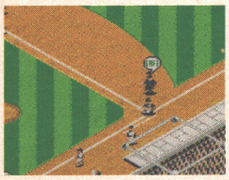
RAILROAD TYCOON
MicroProse £29.99

Uppers – Frightening amount of depth. ***Downers*** – Very slow to get into (and very slow even when you *do* get into it). ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a lot of time to invest in it, well worth a look. *Sim City* is still the better of the two, though. ★★★★

RALLY CROSS CHALLENGE
Anco £19.95

Uppers – Well-programmed *Super Sprint* clone that's great fun with multiple players. ***Downers*** – Limited lastability. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best in its field, but that's more down to lack of competition than anything else. ★★

RBI TWO BASEBALL
Domark £29.99



Uppers – Excellent simulation of baseball, and beautifully presented to boot. ***Downers*** – Over-priced and not all that hot on lasting appeal. ***Bottom Line*** – Very good, but a bit limited, and not quite a classic. ★★★★

RENEGADE LEGION INTERCEPTOR
SSI/US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Military hardware a-go-go gives it instant RPG appeal. ***Downers*** – The strategy isn't deep enough, and the action sequences are way out of date. ***Bottom Line*** – Tales of galactic empires and warfare are a good idea, but this one just falls flat. ★

REVELATION
Krisalis £19.99

Uppers – Neat idea – a puzzle game based on safe cracking. ***Downers*** – Too complex to just pick up and play – bad news for a puzzler. ***The Bottom Line*** – Not bad, but could have been better presented (and who thought up that utterly meaningless name?) ★★

RISE OF THE DRAGON
Sierra £34.99

Uppers – Atmospheric Blade Runner-style first-person adventure which combines digitised photos and comic-book presentation. ***Downers*** – Another hard drive game, and its not the most complex adventure ever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, different and involving. ★★★★

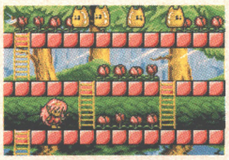
ROBOCOD
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Wit, console-style graphics and gameplay hide behind a barrage of visual jokes and puns. ***Downers*** – Perhaps it could have been a little 'tighter'. ***The Bottom Line*** – Almost as impressive as *Rainbow Islands*! ★★★★★

ROBIN HOOD
Millennium £25.99

Uppers – Witty and cheerful game that makes you love it almost in spite of itself. ***Downers*** – Tiny graphics can get irritating, and there are lots of silly little quirks. ***The Bottom Line*** – Likeable game that's a long way short of classic status, but damn good fun all the same. ★★★★

RODLAND
Storm £25.99



Uppers – Too-cute-to-be-true graphics, wonderful presentation, a near-perfect arcade game in the traditional sense. ***Downers*** – If you're looking for depth and complexity, look somewhere else. ***The Bottom Line*** – A magnificent conversion that actually improves significantly on the original coin-op. Loveable and extremely addictive, you couldn't ask for a better platform arcade game. ★★★★★

ROLLING RONNY
Virgin £25.99

Uppers – Cute, console-style graphics and easy-to-grasp platform gameplay give *Ronny* instant appeal. ***Downers*** – Beneath the varnish lies not very much at all. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very plain game which offers nothing new to Amiga gamers. ★★

R-TYPE II
Activision £25.99

Uppers – 99.99% arcade-perfect, and a beautiful and addictive shoot-'em-up in its own right. ***Downers*** – A couple of tiny bugs, and maybe off-puttingly difficult. (For wimps, anyway). ***Bottom Line*** – The best space blast for the Amiga yet, and possibly the best coin-op conversion too. Absolutely superb. ★★★★★

RUGBY – THE WORLD CUP
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Fast, slick and frenetic action, and brilliant as a two-player game. ***Downers*** – Sacrifices a lot of realism in the quest for flowing play, like penalties for a start. ***The Bottom Line*** – An excellent rendition of the sport which puts playability before authenticity to great effect. ★★★★★

SARAKON
Virgin £19.99

Uppers – Brilliant *Shanghai*-inspired gameplay, make this a strategy classic, and the price is a nice surprise. ***Downers*** – Slightly indistinct symbols can occasionally confuse matters. ***The Bottom Line*** – A supremely addictive puzzler, in the finest 'takes over your entire life' tradition. ★★★★

SEARCH FOR THE KING
Accolade £34.99

Uppers – Superb Elvis gags and attention to detail (particularly in the graphics) mean graphic adventure fans will take to it immediately. ***Downers*** – Accolade blow it to a certain extent with their inefficient parser system. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still a long way to go before it competes with the likes of *Monkey Island*. ★★★

7 COLOURS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Interesting Othello-based concept. ***Downers*** – Useless documentation, terrible music, and relies too heavily on luck for a board game. ***The Bottom Line*** – More or less okay for the first few hours, but rapidly gets horribly boring. ★★

SHADOW SORCERER
US Gold £27.99

Uppers – Very different to the usual SSI orc-slashing fare. ***Downers*** – Disjointed plot and badly thought-out playing system means it never really gets going. ***The Bottom Line*** – Neither as playable as *Hero Quest* or as hardcore as *Eye Of The Beholder*, *Shadow Sorceror* falls uncomfortably between two stools. ★★★

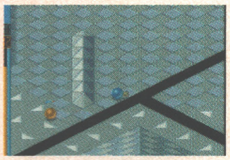
SHANGHAI
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Based on an ancient Chinese tile game, so you know it's going to torture your mind, and it does. Friendly presentation too, and the multi-player against-the-clock games are action-packed enough for the most frenzied blasting fan. ***Downers*** – Slightly fiddly graphics can play havoc with your eyes. ***The Bottom Line*** – Scarily gripping for a game with no moving graphics. The first time you do it you'll want to take out an advert in The Times to tell everybody. ★★★★★

THE SIMPSONS
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A good licence AND a good game. Brilliant console-like scrolling arcade platform sort of thing. ***Downers*** – The main game doesn't really rely on the Simpsons theme, and a bit too complicated for Bart's younger fans. ***The Bottom Line*** – The licence of the year, quite probably. ★★★★

SLIDERS
Palace £25.99



Uppers – Clean 3D isometric graphics, with loads of sporting and *Marble Madness* overtones thrown in for good measure. ***Downers*** – The result is frankly less enjoyable than it sounds. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy yourself *Spindizzy Worlds* or *Speedball 2* instead. ★★

SKI OR DIE
Electronic Arts £24.99

Uppers – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***Downers*** – *Skate Or Die* but with snow. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun (for a while) with friends, but basically an old fashioned, patchy collection of unimpressive sub games. ★

SKULL AND CROSSBONES
Domark £24.99

Uppers – It's all reasonably true to the coin-op. ***Downers*** – Pity it was so crap then, isn't it? ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun being keelhauled.★

SPEEDBALL II
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – The ultimate future sport game to date – fast, brutal, enormously playable. The Bitmaps' finest moment. ***Downers*** – Teams can be hard to tell apart in the heat of the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Buy or die. ★★★★★

SPELLBOUND
Psyclapse £24.99

Uppers – Well-drawn backdrops, and, erm, the packaging is nice. ***Downers*** – Almost no in-game sound, practically nothing in the way of action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Hugely boring arcade adventure thing that's overpriced by £20. ★

SPIRIT OF EXCALIBUR
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Plenty of variation, and it certainly all looks lovely. ***Downers*** – Pitifully slow, and the different sections don't really seem to gel together. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you've got a few hours to kill while you're waiting for a train, this is a game that you can load up without fear of it causing you to miss it. (On the other hand, standing on the platform might be more fun). ★★

SPOT
Leisure Genius £25.99

Uppers – Brilliantly-designed Othello based board game which still manages to offer something new and different (and even supports up to four players). ***Downers*** – The presentation lacks polish in places. ***The Bottom Line*** – A class board-like strategy act. ★★★★★

STARGLIDER II
Rainbird £24.99

Uppers – Instant 3D blasting appeal, with extra depth for those who want it. ***Downers*** – Slightly too repetitive in the long-term. ***The Bottom Line*** – Still one of the best *Star Wars*-inspired releases on the Amiga. ★★★

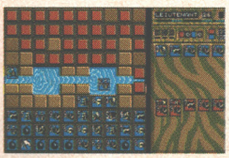
STELLAR 7
Dynamix (Sierra) £24.99

Uppers – Appealingly old-fashioned blast from the past in the form of (yet another!) up-dated *Battlezone*. ***Downers*** – Ever-so-slightly sluggish vector graphics and optimistic pricing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Satisfyingly mindless – but that's both a strength and a weakness. ★★

STORMBALL
Millennium £24.99

Uppers – Reasonably passable graphics. ***Downers*** – Utterly dire game design, no feeling of speed or excitement, highly confusing and largely pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you're looking for a good way to waste £25, throw it down a drain rather than buy this. ★

STRATEGO
Accolade £25.99



Uppers – An engaging strategy bash for one player at least, it adheres to the rules and appearance of the board game remarkably well. ***Downers*** – The fact that it can only be a one player game takes all the fun out of it. ***The Bottom Line*** – A fun board game which can never really work on computer. ★★

STRIKER MANAGER
D&H Games £24.99

Uppers – From the people who brought you *Football Director* (yes, that's its only good point). ***Downers*** – Statistic frenzy with absolutely no gameplay whatsoever. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could push the boundaries of computer games backwards by ten years. ★

STRIP POKER DELUXE
CDS £24.99

Uppers – Can anybody think of any? We can't. ***Downers*** – The poker game is rubbish, the graphics are flickery and all the girls are ugly anyway. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you

want to see pictures of naked women there are better, cheaper and less sad ways of going about it. ★

STUN RUNNER
Tengen (Domark) £24.99

Uppers – Er...the music isn't entirely crap. ***Downers*** – Hopelessly slow, graphically primitive, plus there's a very terminal lack of excitement. ***The Bottom Line*** – Crap in the extreme. ★

SUPER MONACO GP
US Gold £24.99

Uppers – Well-programmed and fun. ***Downers*** – Bears very little resemblance to the coin-op. ***The Bottom Line*** – A very good racing game, but don't expect the arcade. ★★★

SUPER SPACE INVADERS
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Brilliant intro and great sound. ***Downers*** – Incredibly slow, and closer in play to the original *Space Invaders* than the coin-op it's supposed to be a conversion of. ***The Bottom Line*** – Technically inept

and extremely disappointing version of one of the year's most enjoyable arcade shoot-'em-ups. ★★

SUPER SKWEEK
Loriciel £19.99

Uppers – Cute *Defusion*/*Painter*-based game with power-ups and add-ons galore. ***Downers*** – Perhaps a little to French for most of us. ***The Bottom Line*** – Could do with having another fiver chopped off the price, but otherwise great fun. ★★★

SUPER WONDER BOY
Activision £19.99

Uppers – Perfect difficulty curve lets you get just a little bit further every go. Cute graphics add to the charm and the shops where you can spend your gold give it a little extra scope. ***Downers*** – Slightly lacking in action, too slow for some. Not exactly modern looking. ***The Bottom Line*** – Great game in the *Mario* vein, but with less enemies and more depth. ★★★

SWAP
Palace £25.99

Uppers – Interesting and new idea for a puzzle game, programmed perfectly competently. ***Downers*** – It just isn't captivating, and never rises above the averageness. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fails to inspire any emotions at all. It's not good, it's not bad. It's just a bit bland. ★★

SWITCHBLADE II
Gremlin £25.99

Uppers – Gorgeous console-like graphics, tried-and-tested gameplay, packed full of detail and lovely touches. ***Downers*** – Perhaps just a little too simple. ***The Bottom Line*** – Absolutely superb. Arguably the best Amiga platform game to date. ★★★★★

SWIV
Storm £24.99

Uppers – Looks good, sounds good, comes with a neat two-player option – and all in one (massive) level too! ***Downers*** – There aren't any (unless you find all those drab military-style colours a bit depressing or don't actually like shoot-'em-ups at all). ***The Bottom Line*** – Frantic and fabulous– one of the best shoot-'em-ups we've seen.
★★★★★

SWORDS AND GALLEONS
Idea £25.99

Uppers – Uses the classic trading game style to great effect. ***Downers*** – Easy to complete and the stupid omission of a save game option. ***The Bottom Line*** – A minority interest sort of affair.
★★

TANGRAM
Thalion £25.53

Uppers – Perfectly adequate computer translation of the classic Oriental puzzle. ***Downers*** – ... unfortunately it's a really dumb idea for a conversion, and the extras (time limit and suchlike) are intrusive and pointless. ***Bottom Line*** – Getting a real wooden Tangram set would be more fun, as well as much cheaper. ★

TETRIS
Infogrames £19.99

Uppers – Well, it is still *Tetris*. ***Downers*** – But it's probably the worst version yet seen on the Amiga, and that's saying something. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely stinky. (Stick with the PD versions). ★

THEIR FINEST MISSIONS
US Gold £15.99

Uppers – A handy missions disk for *Their Finest Hour*, sure to prolong game life. ***Downers*** – It's really only for lazy people who can't be bothered to construct their own missions with the editor in the original game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fine, but only if you've got the original (obviously).
★★★★

THEME PARK MYSTERY
Image Works £24.99

Uppers – Great feel; looks and sounds lovely. ***Downers*** – Arcade sections are fairly pointless. ***The Bottom Line*** – Games which mix adventures with arcade sequences always suffer for it. ★★

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
US Gold £25.99

Uppers – The closest thing yet to a fully interactive story. Enormous playability, pleasing puzzles and great dollops of – yes! – genuinely witty humour come together to form something very glorious (and very different) indeed. ***Downers*** – Despite the five disks, you'll still need a full meg of ram, and once the game is completed you'll probably never come back to it again. ***The Bottom Line*** – An adventure that looks and plays better than almost any arcade game. Sheer software heaven. Destined for all-time classic status.
★★★★★

THUNDERJAWS
Domark £25.99

Uppers – Um...some quite nice cameo screens with cute babes. ***Downers*** – Crap graphics, crap sound, no gameplay and serious bugs ***The Bottom Line*** – A poor-to-middling coin-op turns into an appalling Amiga game. A total waste of time and money. ★

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin £24.99

Uppers – Very fast, with some pretty hairy track views. Unintentionally hilarious replay feature. ***Downers*** – Insanely sensitive to control. ***The Bottom Line*** – Enough fun to keep you playing until you can at least stay on the road for five seconds at 60mph, but a bit too unrealistic to compete with *Indy 500*. ★★★

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Mirrorsoft £24.99

Uppers – It doesn't have the word 'Ninja' in the title...***Downers*** – ...but even that doesn't save it from being utterly awful in every way. ***The Bottom Line*** – You'd have more fun playing with a real turtle. Or a real mutant. ★

TERMINATOR 2
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – You get exactly what you'll be expecting – Another Ocean Movie Licence With Lots Of Sub-Games And No Depth. ***Downers*** – Only one of the sub-games has any real merit of its own, and the rest are even worse than the norm for this kind of thing. ***The Bottom Line*** – Pretty hopeless run-of-the-mill effort for real diehard Arnie fans only.
★★

TOKI
Ocean £25.39

Uppers – The (latest) definitive coin-op conversion. ***Downers*** – The sound is slightly disappointing, and the game is simply too small. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's there is brilliant, if only there was more of it.
★★★★★

TOTAL RECALL
Ocean £24.99

Uppers – A fair bit of gameplay variation. ***Downers*** – Unfriendly controls, uninspired design. ***The Bottom Line*** – Solid but unexciting.
★★

TOURNAMENT GOLF
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Authentic arcade port. ***Downers*** – Nobody ever played the arcade game. ***The Bottom Line*** – Completely average golfing yawnerama. ★★

TOWER FRA
Thalion £24.99

Uppers – Yes, you guessed it, it's an air traffic control tower simulation. Not as boring as it sounds. ***Downers*** – It's still fairly boring though. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good training for the next generation of air traffic controllers. ★★

3D CONSTRUCTION KIT
Domark/Incentive £49.99

Uppers – Creating your own games (or simply designing little worlds) is great fun. ***Downers*** – Well, it's not really a game as such, is it? It's pretty slow too, and making anything really worthwhile gets very complicated. ***The Bottom Line*** – Expensive and of limited appeal, but if you've always itched to create a Freescape game you can't really complain. ★★★

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – Enjoyable mindless blasting. ***Downers*** – Erm, has there been some mistake here? Someone appears to have sent us a copy of *Turrican*. ***The Bottom Line*** – Better than the original, but that's the only way in which it's different. ★★★

ULTIMA V
Origin (Mindscape) £29.99

Uppers – The scope and depth of *Ultima V* goes way beyond other role-playing adventures, even previous *Ultima* releases. ***Downers*** – Not a bit of joystick action in sight; some may find the size of the game daunting. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Ultima V* offers arguably the best in graphic fantasy (at least until *Ultima VI* comes along). ★★★★★

UNDER PRESSURE
Electronic Zoo £25.99

Uppers – Well, if you like the look of Psygnosis games, you'll like the look of this. ***Downers*** – The execrable walk-and-shoot gameplay would bore a five-year-old. ***The Bottom Line*** – If it's supposed to be a joke, it's very funny. If it's supposed to be an enjoyable game for £26, it's a very bad joke. ★

VOLFIED
Empire £25.99

Uppers – *Qix* was always a brilliant game, and this extremely close coin-op conversion adds to it without overwhelming it. ***Downers*** – Limited number of screens cuts down on its potential lifespan. ***The Bottom Line*** – A classic arcade game excellently converted, but you won't be playing it forever. ★★★

UMS II
Rainbird (MicroProse) £34.99

Uppers – The pinnacle of tech-head wargames, with more user-definable bits than you could ever need. ***Downers*** – Atrocious documentation could mentally scar beginners for life. ***The Bottom Line*** – It won't win the wargaming fraternity any new members, but it'll put some in seventh heaven. ★★★

UTOPIA
Gremlin £29.99

Uppers – The appeal of this kind of city-building thing is timeless, and the war side gives it a new dimension. ***Downers*** – ...but neither side is particularly well-designed, and it can easily end up a touch on the dull side. ***The Bottom Line*** – A good game, but it needs a lot more depth to make it a true classic. ★★★★

VECTOR CHAMPIONSHIP RUN
Impulze £24.99

Uppers – Pretty speedy. ***Downers*** – Uncontrollable. ***The Bottom Line*** – What's the point in a game you can't play? (c.f. Rhetorical Questions For Journalists, Vol. 1). ★

VIZ
Virgin £24.99

Uppers – Very true to the comic. ***Downers*** – Very shallow and limited. The jokes only really work the first time you see them. ***The Bottom Line*** – Fun while it lasts, but after the first couple of hours you've seen all it's got to offer.
★★

WARLOCK THE AVENGER
Millenium £24.99

Uppers – Playable and quite engrossing scrolling arcade adventure romp. ***Downers*** – An 8-bit game in 16-bit's clothing. ***The Bottom Line*** – *Druid* slightly updated for the 90s, and not by any stretch of the imagination worth £25.
★★

WARZONE
Core Design £20.99

Uppers – Graphics have a degree of character to them, and it's pretty tough. ***Downers*** – Adds very little to the hackneyed *Ikari Warriors* format. ***The Bottom Line*** – Competent but deadly dull shoot-'em-up that you've seen a dozen times before. ★★

WHITE SHARKS
Demonware £24.99

Uppers – Exceptionally good graphics, novel 'choose-your-own-power-ups' weapon system. ***Downers*** – Too fast to have any decent feel, and incredibly unimaginative. ***The Bottom Line*** – The game that put the 'bog standard' into 'bog standard shoot-'em-up'. Duff. ★★

WILDLIFE
MD Production £19.99

Uppers – Ideologically sound. ***Downers*** – *Operation Wolf* without shooting is like swimming without water. ***The Bottom Line*** – Utterly desperate. ★

WILD WHEELS
Ocean £25.99

Uppers – Attractive presentation and competent programming make *Wild Wheels* an appealing prospect. ***Downers*** – The whole concept is remarkably shaky, and simply proves unplayable. ***The Bottom Line*** – More like *Mediocre Wheels*, really.
★★

WONDERLAND
Virgin £24.95

Uppers – An evocative telling of the classic Lewis Carrol tale utilising a pretty advanced user-interface. ***Downers*** – Unless you've got a very powerful Amiga with a screen that can handle interlace, the whole thing is very unwieldy. It's not got the best parser in the world either. ***The Bottom Line*** – Brave, but after all the hype the product is something of a let-down. Not a patch on *Monkey Island*. ★★★

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER
Elite £24.99

Uppers – Very good copy of the coin-op (sob). ***Downers*** – Poor playability, you never get two seconds on the ball. ***The Bottom Line*** – Knocked out in the first round. ★★

WRATH OF THE DEMON
Readysoft £29.99

Uppers – Cheaper than *Shadow Of The Beast II*. ***Downers*** – Almost exactly the same in every other respect, even down to inclusion of a spiffing intro sequence. ***The Bottom Line*** – If you liked *S.O.T.B.II* you'll already have bought it, so you won't need this. Otherwise a good alternative. ★★

WRECKERS
Audiogenic £24.99

Uppers – Some refreshing game ideas add a new angle to the old 'aliens-overrun-space station' story. ***Downers*** – The whole thing feels far too much like an 8-bit game – right down to the colour schemes. ***The Bottom Line*** – All the elements of a good game are there – they just haven't been tied together properly. ★★

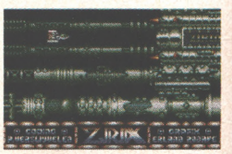
XIPHOS
Electronic Zoo £24.99

Uppers – Silky smooth and pretty darn subtle. ***Downers*** – Takes far too long to get into the action. ***The Bottom Line*** – Only for the dedicated space trader.
★★

ZARATHRUSTA
Hewson £24.99

Uppers – The *Thrust* gameplay is timeless, and it's been updated with 1990s graphics, resulting in something very special indeed. ***Downers*** – At heart though, it's still a game that used to sell for £1.99 going for £25, which isn't a bargain in anyone's language. ***The Bottom Line*** – Good fun, but to be honest, not really very good value. ★★★

ZIRIAX
The Software Business £24.99



Uppers – Pretty *Scramble* variant. ***Downers*** – Seriously overloaded in the difficulty department. ***The Bottom Line*** – Stupidly difficult, too much for almost everyone. More suited to a budget release.
★★

ZONE WARRIOR
Electronic Arts £25.99

Uppers – Well, you don't see many games of this style anymore. ***Downers*** – But that's a bit of a blessing really. ***The Bottom Line*** – Even the programmers of this trashy arcade adventure must have been left with an empty feeling. Avoid it at all costs. ★

Z-OUT
Rainbow Arts £24.99

Uppers – A huge improvement on *X-Out*. ***Downers*** – The horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up with knobs on thing has already been done to death. ***The Bottom Line*** – A better *R-Type* than *R-Type*, but it isn't different enough to make it stand out from the crowd.
★★★

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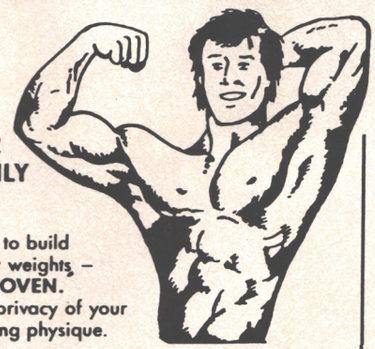

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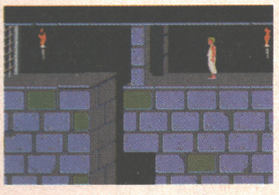
2ND opinion

JOHN KAVANAGH OF DOMARK

Second Opinion is the bit where we offer 'top professionals' in the games industry the opportunity to tell us what *they* think of the recent crop of releases. What they like, what they hate, and where do they think the reviewers went tragically wrong...

John Kavanagh is currently Sales Manager at Domark, and one of the cheeriest, chattiest blokes you could ever hope to meet. Currently responsible for (amongst other things) looking after Domark products in the USA, John used to head up Domark's in-house development team The Kremlin, which is where things get interesting. Some of Domark's best – *MiG29, The Spy Who Loved Me* – and worst – *STUN Runner, Thunderjaws* – have passed through his hands, meaning he's been ideally placed to comment on exactly where everyone else tends to go wrong too...

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund (Domark)



***Prince Of Persia* – "It's just an outstanding game really."**

I think it's fair to rave about this because even though we distributed it, we didn't have much to do with development. It's just an outstanding game really – the programmer's a guy called Jordan Mechner who did a similar 8-bit karate game called *Karateka* once, and he's great. Apparently he's been doing some work in the movies between games. Anyway, I liked it for the animation, the gameplay and the intuitiveness of the controls – you'll see a platform or something, jump for it, and your character will grab hold of it and pull himself up. Of course, that's the way things would actually happen in real life, but for a computer game it's so unexpected it's great! I can't think of another game where you interact with the background quite so much.

Some aspects of the game aren't so good perhaps – the swordfighting could be better, I suppose, but I know for a fact that it will be in the second game. There'll be a lot more weapons to use, and probably some hand-to-hand combat too.

THUNDERHAWK
Core Design

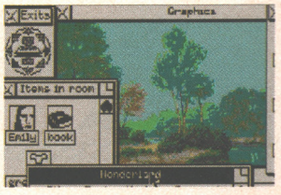
This was one of my favourites of the year – it's very fast, a nice entry level flight sim, and quite different to anything else Core have ever done. Yes, it's very much an action orientated game, but that doesn't bother me at all – I'm into both those and the much more serious sort of flight sim, though games like *F-16 Combat Pilot* do take the accuracy thing too far. *Thunderhawk* was smooth and fast and had some good effects – I'll be interested to see how *Thunderhawk II* turns out, especially if they put a bit more of the realistic stuff in.

In fact, chopper games give a very different feel to ordinary flight sims and I'm surprised there aren't more on the Amiga – just this and *Gunship* that I can think of. I wish they'd converted the EA's PC game *LHX* to the Amiga – it's lots of fun, and the guy who did it also came up with *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Combat Pilot*, which is another of my PC favourites. That one's got a great video recorder mode meaning you can watch your missions from just about any angle after you've completed them – it's something more people should put in their games.

TEENAGE MUTANT HERO TURTLES
Image Works

Oh dear. This is just a bit callous you know, dreadful. Like you know you're going to sell millions of copies, so you don't have to bother with the game. To be honest, I think this converting 8-bit console stuff to the Amiga is pretty dodgy at the best of times. You can see it with *The Simpsons* too – there are never more than about four sprites on screen at once because that's all the Nintendo can handle, and it makes for a limited game.

WONDERLAND
Virgin



***Wonderland* – "The Alice story is something that everyone loves."**

I thought this was fantastic – Magnetic Scrolls doing again what they did with *The Pawn*, redefining how text-based adventures should be done. The windows system they use is really advanced, and while I haven't played it enough to comment on the game structure, I'm assured by people who have that it works well. The whole Alice story is something everyone loves anyway – I like the surreal aspects of it, and the fact that lots of it is a satire on Lewis Carroll's times. Great stuff.

STUN RUNNER
Domark

Let's be really honest and talk about one of our games. This was our biggest disappointment, and as project manager on the game a lot of the blame must come down to me. There was nothing actually wrong with the *programming* – we used all the same graphics as the Atari coin-op and put everything in the right places – but the Amiga just can't run it fast enough to make it work. If we were to do it all again I'd abandon the idea of trying to reproduce the polygon look of the original and go for speed instead, probably using sprites and some sort of modified rolling road routine to produce the tunnel. It was my fault for allowing myself to be taken in by a programmer telling me it was possible to make the sort of speed needed happen when really there was no way. These sort of coin-ops never work on home computers anyway – *Afterburner* fell very much into that category, and I wouldn't be too surprised if *G-Loc* does too...

MAGIC POCKETS
Renegade

***Magic Pockets* – "I'm sure they'll bounce back soon."**

The Bitmaps slipped a bit this year, didn't they? *Gods* was pretty but that was about it really, *Cadaver* bored me and *Magic Pockets* was just derivative – I don't have much else to say about this really, except that I'm sure they'll bounce back with something up to *Speedball II* standards very soon.

JUDGE DREDD
Virgin

I'm a fan of the comics – I used to get them as a kid – so this was a real disappointment. In fact, I can't think of any good 16-bit games inspired by comics at all – *Rogue Trooper* was perhaps the nearest, and even that wasn't really so hot – which is a real shame when you think of the potential, especially of a character like Dredd. Surely a much bigger type of game, perhaps an interactive adventure using the idea of comic book panels, would have been a more satisfying way to go...

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
Lucasfilm (US Gold)

This was a belter – funny, nice graphics, bloody good really. There's been a real surge of original products this year – in fact, all the top games have been originals – which has been great to see. We've suffered a bit at Domark because we had lots of arcade stuff carried over from last year, but with original games like *Shadowlands*, the *Harrier* game and so on we should do much better in '92.

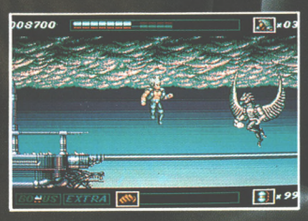
F-15 STRIKE EAGLE II
MicroProse

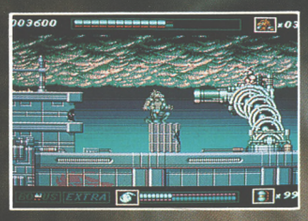
I like flight sims, so no excuses for choosing another one. *F-15 II* has lots of good views in it, and plenty of nicely defined ground objects – that's what MicroProse do well, better than us really. With *MiG* we made the mistake of doing everything to scale, which is accurate, but makes objects look pretty weedy on the landscape – MicroProse tend to do bridges and things that in real life would turn out to be 200 feet wide, but you can't deny they look spectacular on screen.

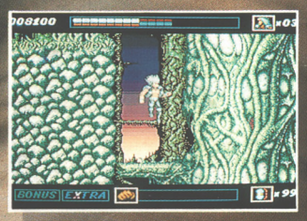
MicroProse tend to come up with interesting missions too – where they fall down is that their flight models are totally out, they never fly like real planes. People asked us why *MiG* didn't "feel like a real aeroplane – you know, like in a MicroProse game" which shows how many people they've fooled. Still, it's true that with *MiG* we concentrated perhaps a bit too much on the flight model at the expense of the look and presentation of the rest of the game. With *Harrier* we're hoping to get the best of both worlds. ●

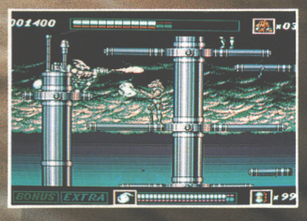
"Where (MicroProse) fall down is that... they never fly like real planes"

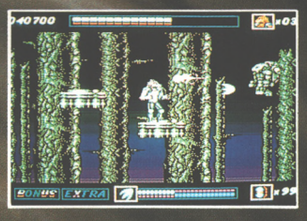
WOLFCHILD











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Ultima VI – *one of the new wave of FRPs, rated next issue*

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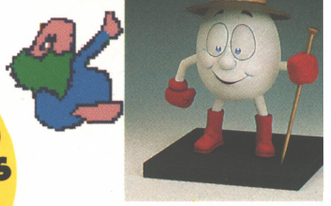
Ultima VI - one of the many wave of RPGs rated next issue

2 DISK ISSUE!

OH NO...



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AMIGA POWE